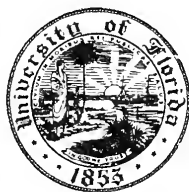


ROBERT D. BLOOD JR.

Marriage

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# *Marriage*

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# Marriage

BY ROBERT O. BLOOD, JR.

*Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Michigan*

*The Free Press of Glencoe*



Second Printing 1962

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# Preface

Sociology

This book is a successor to *Anticipating Your Marriage*, published by the Free Press in 1955. Though some case materials and illustrations are the same, the text itself has been almost completely rewritten to meet the eagerness of today's students for a mature and sophisticated treatment of a subject vitally important to them.

Specifically this book is:

Ms. Miller

*Scientific.* The best available scientific evidence about human behavior, its causes and consequences, has been drawn from more than 250 books and articles. Key data are presented in lucid charts and graphs, often simplified from the original sources for clarity of understanding. Where the evidence is conflicting, I have drawn the most probable generalizations from it. Where the evidence is lacking, I have drawn on the best available theories. Though the original sources are often highly technical, I have written for students without particular prerequisites (those with previous training should find this a useful synthesis of the scientific literature).

*Idealistic.* The book is concerned with more than mere description of what *is*. It is interested in what marriage can be like at its best and in how that ideal can be achieved. This does not contradict the scientific approach, for science can tell us not only what the *average* family does but also what *unusual* families do—the kind of families that achieve the most satisfaction, produce the most effectively socialized children, and attain other widely shared goals in life. Values, to be sure, differ from

1-10-63

reader to reader. But this book spells out the means by which particular values may be achieved.

*Integrated.* The concept of "personal relationships" is the central theme of this book—how they develop in courtship, are maintained in marriage, and extended to children. Similarities are spelled out between analogous situations at different stages of the family life cycle and between analogous facets of experience at any one time. The book searches for patterns amid conflicting data and for comprehensive generalizations from the subject as a whole. Scattered materials from sociology, psychology, biology, medicine, economics, religion, and elsewhere are synthesized into an integrated unit.

*Focused.* In a complicated and many-faceted world, this book is intentionally focused on those experiences that most Western (and especially American) young people can expect to encounter as they progress from dating to marriage and family living. Within Western society the experiences of the middle class generally and of college students in particular are emphasized, since they are my chief audience. Such readers can understand their own experiences and opportunities better against occasional references to differing groups and other societies. Always, however, the intention is to mobilize information and ideas that bear upon the practical experiences and choices the reader is likely to face in his roles as husband and father or wife and mother.

I am deeply indebted to the hundreds of researchers, clinicians, and authors whose works have been harvested for this book. In my years of teaching at a small, church-related college and a large state university I have benefited from the ideas and experiences of innumerable colleagues, students, and marriage counseling clients. I should like to thank Jean L. Jennings, M.D., and George W. Morley, M.D., for their assistance in reading Chapter 5 and Chapters 18, 19, and 20, respectively. For its central concepts, the book reflects the stimulus of G. E. Swanson's syllabus on "Primary Groups" and of Paul Eberts' generous chapter-by-chapter suggestions drawn from sociological and psychological theory. For its completion in due time, I am indebted to my family—Margaret, Peter, Alan, Larry, and Jonathan—for sacrificing a vacation trip and delaying many a swimming expedition until Daddy could finish his writing.

Robert O. Blood, Jr.

Ann Arbor, Michigan  
March, 1962



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# *Marriage*





# *Introduction*

## *The Meaning of Marriage*

Every schoolboy knows what marriage is—the tie that binds a man and a woman together. Yet, like most schoolboy definitions, this one is inadequate. More precision is needed if we are to understand the essence of marriage and to choose among the conflicting philosophies that exist today.

Before delving into those intricacies, we need to emphasize the importance of marriage. Life consists of a combination of roles played in various institutional settings—religious in the church, political in the community, economic in the corporation, marital in the family, and a few others. Of these roles, only two involve major segments of life for the average person: (1) A job takes forty hours a week, more or less; a career spreads over forty or fifty years. “What do you do?” is one of the most revealing questions we can ask a man. So the economic role is unquestionably prominent in life. (2) A woman who is “just a housewife” may deprecate the interest value of her role, but her marriage embraces most of her life. If she works too, she has two major responsibilities in life, as does her husband. The only question remaining is which is more important.

Even if we evaluate a man primarily by what he does rather than by the kind of husband he is, the latter function still counts heavily. Marriage means something special because it is so different from work. Work emphasizes the product. The human beings who work for the company are just means to that end. To be sure, marriage has products too, in the shape of children, but the primary emphasis is not on reproduction but on the personal relationship between husband and wife. Regardless, therefore, of the relative amount of time a married man or woman may invest in marriage versus job, marriage has special significance.

In recent years, the gap has narrowed between the values emphasized by men and women. As women increasingly enter the labor force, they are less exclusively home-oriented than before. With the maturing of the American economy, men are less production-minded and more interested in enjoying the good things of life, especially the companionship of wife and children. For at least some groups of American men at some stages in life, family values have even eclipsed occupational values in importance (see Table 1). In any case, family relationships rank high in the minds of contemporary Americans of both sexes.

**Table 1—Expected Source of Greatest Satisfaction in Life  
Reported by College Men and Women**

<i>Expected Source of Greatest Satisfaction in Life</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Family relations	60%	87%
Career	31	6
Leisure-time recreational activities	4	2
Religious beliefs and activities	3	4
Participation as a citizen in community affairs	1	*
Participation in activities directed toward national or international betterment	1	1
Total	100%	100%
No. of cases	629	407

\* Less than 1/2 of 1%.

Adapted from Goldsen, 1960: 210, and from unpublished data on women students kindly furnished by Dr. Goldsen. Source: Cornell University undergraduates, 1952.

## Marriage as a Personal Relationship

The essence of marriage is the personal relationship between the partners. To use a more technical term, marriage is what sociologists call a "primary relationship." As such, marriage falls in a small class (along with friendship) that contrasts with most relationships. Typical secondary relationships are those between employer and employee, politician and voter, salesman and customer, or conductor and passenger—imper-

sonal, official relationships. The contact is between officeholders who are treated a certain way because of the position they hold, not because of who they are. A proper clerk treats all his customers in the same manner, regardless of who they are. His business is to sell his product, not to get involved in the customer's personal life, which is "none of his business." So clerk and customer normally limit their behavior to the transaction at hand. The rest of their personalities, problems, and interests remain unknown to each other.

Personal relations, by contrast, are all-embracing. They involve the total personality in a face-to-face, person-to-person experience. Because of this extensiveness and intensity of contact, strong feelings develop between the persons involved—feelings that may be negative as well as positive.

Personal relations are ends in themselves, not means to ends. Because the emphasis is on the partner's total personality, and because every person in the world is unique, personal relations are particularistic, glorying in the partner's distinctive characteristics. Whereas it matters little which clerk waits on me in a big store, it makes all the difference in the world whom I marry. One clerk should be as good as another, but not just any wife will do. Marriage is too complex and too intimate for interchangeability.

To say that personal relations are noninstrumental doesn't mean there are no benefits to those involved. Rather, it means that the benefits are not the focus of attention. The focus is on the encounter between the two persons, between what Martin Buber calls the *I and Thou*. Awareness, sensitivity, and response are the dominant moods. Spontaneity and generosity characterize the interaction. Love is the motivating force.

By contrast, the world of business consists of deals. *Quid pro quo*. A fair exchange. Justice arrived at by bargaining. Contractual arrangements—if you do this for me, then I will pay you so much. Be sure to read the fine print. Watch out that you don't pay too much or sell too cheaply. Look out for your own interests.

Business relations are typically limited, standardized, unemotional, utilitarian, and contractual. Conversely, personal relations are essentially unlimited, particularistic, and emotionally involved, altruistic, and spontaneous (Parsons, 1959).\*

#### THE FUNCTIONS OF PERSONAL RELATIONS

Even though personal relations are nonutilitarian, they inevitably have practical consequences. Whereas business relations are designed to benefit the participants, personal relations are not—yet benefits occur

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\* For details of references, see the alphabetical List of References at the back of the book.

nevertheless. Not bargained for, not claimed as rights, not agreed upon in writing, the benefits of personal relations are nevertheless easily seen. They may be described under two main headings: need-gratification and social control.

*Need-Gratification.* The human animal has many needs, so many that it is difficult to name them all. In many societies, biological needs for food, clothing, and shelter have been available only through the personal relationships of family life. Our modern urban society still provides most of these physical services through the family, even though purchasable substitutes are now available in the form of restaurants, laundries, and hotels. Personal relations are no longer the only possibly source of gratification for our economic needs even though they may still be the preferred source.

Another biological need—sex—is more ambiguous. Superficially it too seems purchasable, though only on the black market. However, sexual gratification is more than tension-release, and in this fuller sense it is available only in the context of personal relations. Indeed, we shall suggest in Chapter 18 that sexual intercourse is the quintessence of personal relationship. Hence, one of the distinctive functions of marriage is to gratify the partners' sexual needs.

When we turn to certain psychological needs, it is clear that they can be satisfied only through personal relations. Foremost among these is what psychologists call the "need for affiliation"—that is, the need to be related to other people. By definition, this need for relationship requires personal relations. Although it differs in strength and salience from person to person, it is a universal need.

Perhaps in simpler societies based on stable communities and complex households it could be assumed that everyone's need for affiliation would be satisfied. The individual was embedded in a network of personal relations from which there was no escape. Life itself could not go on in solitude, and there were no crowds to get lost in.

Today, however, "the lonely crowd" is the symbol of our civilization (Riesman, 1954). We are lonely in the midst of the crowd as long as our relationships with others are restricted and segmental. Only when we are able to establish a fully personal relationship with another individual do we escape the sense of estrangement that so often afflicts modern man. The need for affiliation is therefore intrinsically met by personal relations—whether in marriage or in friendship.

In personal relations we achieve a sense of belonging, of being accepted for what we are, of being at home in the world. Personal relations are good for the ego because they provide us with someone who cares, with an audience for our jokes and our troubles. No longer do we have to wonder whether anybody will listen to what we have to say. We know we can count on the attention and the response of our partner.

These services could be given various labels, but they are detailed ways in which our need for affiliation is gratified in personal relations.

*Social Control.* Because personal relations are reciprocal, the benefits I receive in the gratification of my own needs must be matched by my partner's claim to equal benefits. This is a moral not a legal claim. Indeed, my colleague G. E. Swanson believes that personal relations are the primary source of morality and ethics. Why should this be true?

As I enter into a personal relationship, I become aware of my partner's needs, feelings, and desires. The intimacy of the relationship confronts me with her expectations of me. The more I become involved with her, the greater my moral obligation to care for her as she cares for me, to listen to her as she listens to me, to put myself out for her as she does for me.

In this spontaneous and inevitable way, a personal relationship becomes not only a source of satisfaction for me but also a claim upon my energies. In a sense, the bachelor is quite right when he sees marriage as a ball-and-chain affair. A personal relation is always a limitation upon oneself. It limits my freedom to be irresponsible, to lead a gay, self-indulgent life without a care in the world. As soon as I enter into a personal relationship, I take on a responsibility to and for another person. I am no longer free to be immoral, to ignore my friend's need.

Immature persons may recoil before responsibilities; but learning to accept them is one of the benefits of personal relations. Responsibilities help us to grow, lure us out of our protective shells, humanize us from the egotistical animalism of our infantile beginnings. Guiding us toward maturity is part of what our own parents do for us while we are growing up; but most of us exploit our parents too much to find true maturity at home. It takes the free and equal relationships of friendship and love to complete our transformation into humane beings.

#### THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF MARRIAGE

So far we have been discussing personal relations in general, whether informal friendships or formal marriages. Friendship and marriage share many characteristics. However, the meaning of marriage lies partly in its distinctiveness as a sexual relationship, a comprehensive relationship, and a permanent relationship.

*A Sexual Relationship.* We have already suggested that the sexual aspect of marriage reveals how personal it is. What deserves to be added here is that marriage is the *only* legitimate personal relation that is sexual in nature. Our culture generally and our religions in particular teach that marriage is the only proper locus of sexual intercourse. This teaching is often violated; yet the violations are usually fleeting and irregular

in comparison to the long-term regularity of sexual intercourse in marriage. In this crucial sense marriage is a more intimate relationship than any other.

Because of this sexual component, marriage also entails the unique feature of child-rearing. Conception and reproduction may occur outside of marriage, it is true. But illegitimacy is not only stigmatized by society but also unwanted by the unmarried themselves. Only within marriage do children come as both a natural and an intended consequence of sexual intercourse. And any parent can testify to the pervasive repercussions that children have on the lives of those who care for them.

*A Comprehensive Relationship.* Marriage is not only uniquely sexual but also uniquely comprehensive. Sexual activities may occur under other auspices. Even child-rearing may be approximated by an institutional housemother. But only marriage combines sex and parenthood and companionship and housekeeping into the most comprehensive package known to man. Even though any personal relationship by definition embraces many aspects of life, the most humdrum marriage eclipses all but the most extraordinary friendship in the breadth of the relationship. Whatever the facet of life—physical, mental, social, spiritual, financial—it contributes to the pervasiveness of married living.

*A Permanent Relationship.* Despite the long-term rise in the American divorce rate, divorce is still the exception and permanence the rule both statistically and normatively. The reasons for this are many. Partly it is a consequence of the previous features. Because of the possibility of conception, most women are strongly attached to their sexual partner. When conception does occur, the long period of dependence of the human child requires a stable nurturing framework. Society's concern for the adequate socialization of children in the family is largely responsible for the heavy social pressure for marital stability and the corresponding disapproval of divorce.

In our technological society geographical mobility has become increasingly common. As people move from town to town, their network of primary relationships is torn to shreds—all save one, their marriage. Friends must be left behind on moving day, but marriage partners need not be. So the permanence of marriage has taken on new significance as the rest of life becomes more transient.

#### THE INCREASING PERSONALIZATION OF MARRIAGE

There was a time when the personal aspect of marriage mattered far less than it does today. Under such primitive conditions as the American frontier the harsh realities of life leave little time for love-making. When the family must be factory and farm and church and school combined

into one, it becomes very much an instrumental agency focused on jobs to be done.

When, as in feudal societies, the household becomes a complex, three-generation affair, the personal relation of husband and wife is even more subordinated. Under such circumstances the wife often finds personal satisfaction in her children, and the husband with a concubine.

The stripping away of so many utilitarian functions of the family in urban society and the restriction of the household to the husband-wife-children nucleus frees the family from its institutional, intergenerational shackles. Unencumbered by so many duties and obligations, the members of the family are now able to appreciate each other as persons. Given the increased leisure of our maturing economy, they can enjoy each other's company.

This simplification of family structure and functioning means that it can now specialize as never before in personal relationships. The "lost" functions of the family have been taken over by specialized economic, political, educational, and religious institutions. What remains to the family is a chance to specialize too in an area where no other social institution can. Perhaps in the past it would not have been possible to say that marriage is essentially a personal relationship. Now, however, that is the basic meaning of marriage.

## The Prerequisites of Personal Relations

Perhaps few would question what has been said so far. The broad sweep of history is not easily overlooked. When we turn from social analysis to particular cases, however, we encounter tremendous variability among marriages. Although the average marriage is more personal today, there are countless exceptions. A man and woman may live in the same house—even sleep in the same bed—and ignore each other. They may carry on the pragmatic routines necessary to keeping house together, but their relationship is impersonal as long as they fail to look at each other, listen to each other, and give themselves to each other. Such hollow marriages, while less dramatic, may be even more common than divorce.

If we were to ask such couples how they feel about their marriage, they would undoubtedly express disappointment. Mere existence together leaves many needs unsatisfied. It falls far short of what we expect of marriage today.

Under modern circumstances expectations for marriage have risen. We are no longer satisfied with the perfunctory functional relations that were once the rule. Now we hope that marriage will continue the

intensity of personal involvement that young lovers experience. Now we look askance at husbands so occupationally involved and wives so burdened with children that they have no time for each other.

Perhaps we expect too much. Perhaps one reason we have so many divorces is that we expect the impossible. Yet casual observation shows that some couples do have good marriages—not perfect perhaps, but good enough to excite the envy of those who don't.

If we take as our standard of comparison not some theoretical ideal but the solid satisfactions of the best marriages we can find, then the question arises whether these people are merely lucky or whether others could do as well if they only knew how.

Some social scientists are fatalistic about this question. They point to deep-seated irrational factors that plague unhappy marriages or to the way divorce tends to infect the same families from generation to generation. Human personality is largely shaped in childhood, they say, and character defects will trouble a person for the whole of his life.

There is some truth in this point of view. There *is* a lot of determinism in human behavior. Yet, within limits, every man has some freedom of choice. And the choice between alternatives does matter.

The man in the street may be clearer about this than the social scientist. The world is full of advice to the lovelorn—advice given and sought in the assumption that it will be useful. The world is full too of books on how to be happily married—of which this is one—all based on the premise that the die is not entirely cast at birth.

Perhaps the inappropriateness of fatalism about marriage can be seen more clearly by analogy. In the world of work, we don't give IQ all the credit for a job well done. Congratulatory speakers praise the leader's hard work, his untiring efforts, his willingness to overcome obstacles. It is in the area of the spirit and the will that success is made—in public and in private.

The opposite of fatalism is not optimism in any Pollyanna form. Success in marriage is no easier than on the job. But fatalism is unduly pessimistic. Activity can pay off. So the premise of this book rests not on fatalism but on activism.

If divorce were simply inevitable, we would expect the same people to go on having divorces all their lives. A few do—playboys, movie stars, and misfits. But the majority of divorced people do better the second time; their second marriage succeeds where the first one failed. This means that they either married the wrong person the first time, or that they learned something in the meantime, or that they tried harder or were less distracted the second time.

These are precisely the prerequisites of success in marriage (not only of avoiding divorce). To choose the right partner, to know how to treat him, to take the trouble to do so, and to be supported by others in doing



so—these are the prerequisites of a good marriage. In shorthand, they are (a) compatibility, (b) skill, (c) effort, and (d) support.

### COMPATIBILITY

“Compatibility” in this book has a very restricted meaning. It does not refer to the level of adjustment a couple achieve after marriage by giving a little here and compromising there. Rather, it refers to the goodness of fit that exists between the partners’ intrinsic characteristics. Compatibility between two people, therefore, either exists or doesn’t exist. To be more precise, it varies by degrees. I am more compatible with this girl than I am with that one. In this sense, compatibility is something to be discovered between people. When sufficient compatibility is found, it provides the basis for the first main choice in marriage—whom to marry.

Even though compatibility is primarily determined in the process of childhood socialization, it is not completely unchangeable. In a follow-up study of adults over a twenty-year period Kelly (1955) concluded that there is a good deal of inconsistency in adult personality. Moreover, he did not find that married couples grew any more like each other with the passing decades. This means that the average couple must expect to face new incompatibilities as new interests and attitudes arise in each partner.

Unfortunately for the sake of young eligibles, changes in compatibility can’t be predicted; so marital choice can only be made on the basis of present compatibility.

In vocational guidance compatibility consists in matching the right man to the right occupation. The individual’s vocational aptitudes and interests need to fit the requirements of the job. With so many different types of work available, the task is to find the best fit. “Square pegs in round holes” lead to failure. Choosing the right vocation doesn’t guarantee success but makes it possible.

Similarly, compatibility between marriage partners determines how easily a personal relationship can be established. For a highly compatible couple love blossoms easily. The less compatible they are, the harder it is to achieve success. Yet compatibility is not the only factor involved. A lazy man can be fired from the “right” job, and a compatible couple can let their marriage go to seed for lack of effort. Conversely, “hiring the handicapped is good business” if the handicapped are specially trained to compensate for their difficulties. And a couple can overcome substantial handicaps if they tackle them with finesse.

Compatibility, then, provides only the potentialities of a good marriage. It is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The more compatible two people are, the better—but the potentialities must be translated into actuality.

## SKILL

The next step beyond vocational choice is vocational training. Ph.D., M.D., LL.B., B.D.—these are the admission tickets without which one can hardly enter professional practice.

The skills of marriage are less clearly defined and less easily programmed. In Japan they were traditionally flower-arrangement, tea-ceremony, and sewing for girls—there were none for boys. In America they were cooking and sewing for girls—again none for boys.

With the changing times the personalization of marriage has brought new standards of performance. These standards are expressed more often in terms of results than of methods. But the implication is clear that greater finesse is required to achieve those results.

For instance, for wives to be sexually satisfied requires finesse in foreplay. The mental hygiene function of marriage requires skill in solacing hurt feelings. The shared decision-making that has replaced old patriarchal ways demands skill in expressing needs and reciprocal skill in listening and empathizing with the partner. When conflicting preferences are expressed, skill in deadlock-breaking comes into play. Etc., etc.

Few Americans realize that such skills exist. There are no road tests to pass before getting a marriage license. Yet marital casualties can and do result from clumsiness in human relations:

I know now that I was too young when I got married. I forced myself on Arlene and didn't pay enough attention to her desires. Perhaps if we had waited a little longer, I would have treated her better.\*

We won't attempt in this preview to discuss whether this husband's diagnosis was correct—whether expertise can be acquired simply by waiting. Suffice it now to point out that marriages differ tremendously in the skillfulness of the partners, and that the more skillful they are, the better their marriage will be.

For those who lack skill in human relations few courses exist in training for marriage. One of the concerns of this book is to describe some of the skills involved, especially in making decisions. But whether training is consciously or unconsciously acquired, skill in resolving incompatibilities and achieving goals goes far to determine the successfulness of marriage.

## EFFORT

In careers it is taken for granted that success depends on effort as well as on skill and aptitude. But experts disagree on the relevance of effort in

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\* Case materials are adapted from a wide variety of sources. All names used are pseudonyms.

marriage. Some people boil at the suggestion, feeling that marriage is the one place in life where a man should be able to relax and enjoy himself. Love, they say, cannot be forced. It is the spontaneity of love that makes it so wonderful.

To be sure, there is a lot of spontaneity in the best human relationships. Especially at the beginning of a love affair, there is a remarkable momentum derived from discovering a compatible, skillful partner. The romantic enthusiasm generated by what Erich Fromm (1956) calls "the collapsing of the walls" between two people propels them onward into increasing mutual involvement. Buoyed up by the joy of discovering each other, they revel in acts of thoughtfulness and the expression of their new-found affection. Hence, the initial establishment of a personal relationship between lovers often occurs effortlessly.

However, the less compatible a couple are, the more problems they will have to resolve. The less skillful they are, the lower their level of spontaneous achievement will be. The greater these handicaps, the more appropriate it is to "turn on the steam" rather than to be satisfied with spontaneous mediocrity. Effort means taking the trouble to listen when the partner is talking, to rub her back when it hurts, to be nice to his mother even when she's an old crab. It means doing more than "what comes naturally." It means extending the limits of patience, tenderness, and appreciation.

Is this possible? Can people act more nicely than they feel? Can they transcend irritation and boredom to treat others as they would like to be treated? Certainly there are limits to what we can expect of human nature. But, whereas man cannot add a "cubit" to his physical stature, the saints of all ages have demonstrated that he can add to his moral stature if he tries hard enough. While few readers of this book can expect to be canonized for marital excellence, it is precisely the altruism of the saints that makes for excellence in personal relations. Where altruism seems difficult to attain, the resources of religious faith may strengthen it.

This kind of effort may not be greatly needed by a well-matched couple—at least in the beginning. However, marital careers rarely flourish indefinitely on mere spontaneity. The initial impetus of love tends to falter as time passes. As new discoveries cease, even the best partners become taken-for-granted. Customary ways of doing things are less interesting, so attention and interaction decrease between the partners. Simultaneous with this weakening of mutual fascination is the declining impetus to interaction that results from aging. Gerontologists focus on men and women older than sixty, but aging is a gradual process that undermines spontaneous vitality from the very beginning of marriage.

To distinguish the effects of habituation and of aging from each other is difficult and unnecessary for our purposes. These twin factors produce

the same results—a tendency for the average marriage to become depersonalized. Later on we will document the tendency for couples to pay less attention to each other and do less together. To give but one example here, Kinsey (1949) reports a steady decline in the frequency of sexual intercourse with length of marriage. Such a decline is especially significant because sex is so much the heart of the marital relationship.

To be sure, much of the declining pace of marriage is inevitable. Habituation and aging are real processes that cannot simply be ignored. Nevertheless, they can be offset to some extent by extra effort. Declining averages don't mean that every marriage must decline. They only mean that these things tend to happen "if you don't watch out."

The role of effort is therefore to compensate for the corrosion of time in every marriage as well as for the special problems faced by incompatible and unskillful couples. Other things being equal, a marriage is better off with effort than without it, both in the short run and perhaps especially in the long run. With effort a couple may not only hold the line against deterioration but also continue to develop their relationship from year to year. If a man's career line can show progressively greater productivity and responsibility, why can't a marriage? It all depends on a willingness to try.

## SUPPORT

Success in marriage depends primarily on the compatibility, skill, and effort of the partners themselves. However, marriages are not impervious to influence from without. Hence, external support is an additional factor in marital achievement.

Support may come both from personal and institutional sources. The significant persons in a couple's environment include families and friends. Parents may offer abundant resources of money and personal service (as we shall see in Chapter 15), or they may pit husband against wife through destructive criticism or conflicting demands. Friends may provide models of marital stability and idealism, or they may tear a marriage apart through extramarital involvements in wife-swapping parties or surreptitious seduction.

Institutional support comes partly through joint participation in the same organizations, providing companionship and common values for husband and wife. Conversely, conflicting institutional demands are one of the strains imposed on interfaith marriages. Support for marriages in trouble may be provided through community services, such as family-life discussion groups and marriage counseling facilities.

In particular cases the presence or absence of these external forces may make or break a marriage.

## Marriage in Context

The meaning of marriage can be found primarily within marriage itself—in the relationship between husband and wife. However, that is not the whole story. Families live in society not in a vacuum. Society sustains, shapes, and controls family life in ways too important to ignore. Moreover, each member of the family, as an individual, participates in social relations outside the family that affect his behavior within it. Thus collectively and individually the external environment of the family impinges upon it.

### THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE FAMILY

Over the generations, the setting for family living has changed enormously. The physical environment is part of the transformation. The cities we live in are bigger, the churches bigger, the supermarkets bigger. Houses may not be as big as they once were, but they are more adequately heated, easier to keep clean, and filled with more noisy machinery. The outside world has been piped into our homes via television and is more accessible directly through improved transportation.

The social environment keeps changing too, in pace with technical changes. On the one hand, increased premarital and extramarital intimacy challenge the exclusiveness of marriage. Divorce and remarriage are more accepted, challenging the permanence of marriage. On the other hand, family-life education in school and church reaches more people.

It would be difficult to say whether the world has become better or worse for families to live in. The only thing we can be sure of is that it has changed and that the pace of change is accelerating. Our children will live in a world far different from our own.

But the world never has been and never will be uniform. We can generalize about trends to suburban living but need to remember that there are still families living in slums, in apartment houses, in small towns (and even on farms!) whose circumstances are significantly different.

Our purpose in this Introduction is not to trace the impact of these environmental changes and variations on family life but to state a point of view—namely, that family life cannot be understood out of context.

### THE EXTERNAL ROLES OF FAMILY MEMBERS

If marriage were the full-time business of every man and woman, our descriptive task would be greatly simplified. But every man has “full-time” work to do as well as his family’s concerns to attend to. He has duties and loyalties to his employer as well as to his wife. Since he is

both husband and employee, he is subject to potential cross-pressures, certainly to dual pressures. To some extent a man can't be an outstanding family man and an outstanding company man at the same time. The more time he puts in at the office, the less time he has for his family, and vice versa. Perhaps too the more effort he devotes to one, the less energy he has for the other (though many men could devote more to both without exhausting themselves). Night work and traveling assignments especially interfere with family leisure.

Yet being a good husband means earning a good income as well as cultivating his relationship with his wife. So every man must strike a balance between the requirements of his occupational and marital roles. The right balance is not easily ascertained. It depends on how ambitious both partners are and on the requirements of the husband's job. The balance often shifts at different points in the family cycle and the career line. The point here is that the husband's involvement in the occupational system has extensive repercussions on his behavior as husband and father. Ditto the working wife's. Ditto also the other external roles of modern man: citizen, churchman, clubwoman, or whatever.

Though this pattern of life is more complicated than rural isolation, it isn't necessarily the worse for all of that. Stresses from conflicting roles may exist, but there are rewards as well. Multiple group memberships provide variety and spice in life. Outside the family, resources are acquired that contribute to family living.

For example, we can predict better which partner will make most of the decisions in marriage if we know their pattern of external participation than if we rely on knowledge of their personalities alone. The mere exodus of the wife from home to work strengthens her hand in major financial decisions at home (Blood, 1962). The more successful either partner is outside the home, the more deference he receives at home.

To understand marriage fully, therefore, it is necessary to see husbands and wives functioning outside as well as inside the home, playing their nonmarital as well as their marital roles in life. Certainly marriage is a major part of life. But it isn't the whole.

Marriage is, or ought to be, a personal relationship. But other primary relationships in life supplement the rewards of marriage—or replace them for those who never marry. And, married or single, the secondary relations of business and government are just as essential parts of modern life. Marriage can mean wonderful things, but it's not the boundary of human existence. The meaning of marriage is only part of the meaning of life.

## *Part One*

# COURTSHIP

Courtship, broadly speaking, is the entire process that leads up to marriage. Chapter 1 analyzes casual dating, which may provide a wealth of experience in personal relations and pays off in the later stages of courtship. A good deal is known about the social characteristics of married couples and an increasing amount about personality needs in marriage—as set forth in two chapters on choosing a marriage partner. Traditionally undefinable, the feelings of love so characteristic of American courtship nevertheless deserve our fullest understanding; such is the purpose of Chapter 4. Since this love is seldom platonic, the question of the place of sexual attraction and expression during courtship inevitably follows. However, love and sexual attraction by themselves do not guarantee readiness for marriage (Chapter 6). Once that readiness is achieved, most couples move swiftly through the transitional stages of engagement, wedding, and honeymoon into marriage.

Taken together, these chapters portray the process of awakening interest in the opposite sex, gradual involvement and increasing intimacy with a few, and the final decision of two people to undertake the adventure of marriage together.





# *Dating:*

## *Practice for Marriage*

In the eyes of many foreigners the American dating system is one of the most shocking aspects of our culture. To date a large number of partners seems emotionally promiscuous. To disavow any thought of marrying most of them seems like callous exploitation.

In most countries dating is either completely taboo or a serious business, not to be taken with American light-heartedness. If taboo, then "blind-mates" may be arranged by doting parents or selected hardly less blindly from written reports and perhaps a formal interview with prospective applicants. If serious business, then one normally marries his first date, or at least dating is expected to lead directly to marriage.

In the United States the connection between dating and marriage is much less direct. Nobody jumps to conclusions that just because John has a date with Suzy tonight he is likely to marry her. To be sure, eventually he will marry somebody he has dated, but the chances for any one dating partner are very slim.

The connections between dating and marriage in America are mostly indirect. Dating provides a background for marriage. It provides laboratory instruction in some of the dynamics of marriage. It is not so much "trial marriage" in the old sense of the term as experience in marriage-relevant behavior.

The fact that Americans date more than any other people in the world is no accident. Our social circumstances demand it. In a simple,

undifferentiated society almost any marriage partner will do, so the process of mate selection can be casual. In a feudal society the emphasis on vertical social relationships means that a new bride is more the man's mother's daughter-in-law than his own wife, so the process of mate selection becomes highly formalized. In the United States mate selection is neither casual nor formal but highly personalized.

Our society is complex and highly differentiated. Not only is it stratified into social classes, but also within each class there are differences in temperament, tastes, and values from person to person. As a result, potential marital combinations differ markedly in compatibility.

To some extent individual differences exist in every society, but Americans are less prepared to ignore them. Elsewhere clashes between husband and wife are settled automatically by the rule of male-dominance. Divergent recreational interests do not matter where couples don't expect to spend their leisure together. By contrast, American patterns of equalitarian decision-making and joint use of leisure time require careful pairing. Dating provides the opportunity for trial-and-error selectivity.

In our affluent, consumption-oriented society we expect so much of marriage that high levels of skill in personal interaction are required to fulfil those expectations. Again, dating provides an opportunity to develop marital skills.

So, in more ways than one, the American system of dating is a useful and necessary foundation for our system of marriage.

## Dating as Preparation for Marriage

Conscious motives for dating are seldom marriage-oriented, at least in early adolescence. Various studies show that reasons for dating may be as diverse as self-improvement, group pressure, or to gain admission to a couples-only affair (Lowrie, 1951). In many respects it is preferable for dating individuals not to think about marriage too soon if the full range of values is to be derived from dating:

Dating for me began about the beginning of seventh grade. This early dating took the form of steady relationships very early. My dominant motive was for close relationships to satisfy my emotional needs. I looked forward to marriage as a goal from my earliest experiences. As I look back on this time I see that my parents were right about this early dating being rushed too much, but what neither they nor I realized was that it was serving a vital need they were neglecting.

The great error in my dating was that it became marriage-oriented at an unrealistic age. I considered qualities in dates on the basis of my marriage ideals almost from the very beginning. This orientation pushed me into involvement at too early an age. As a result, my dating partner variety has been less numerous and my dating span was cut short by early marriage.

The American system of dating works best as an end in itself, as pure recreation. But regardless of the motives of the participants, dating has significant consequences for marriage. These may be discussed under the general headings of knowledge of the opposite sex and development of interpersonal skills.

#### KNOWLEDGE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX

Dating is not the only way of getting to know the opposite sex. Co-education provides a rich background of classroom contact. Cross-sex friendships may arise in extracurricular organizations, church groups, and home neighborhoods. Aside from dating, however, these contacts tend to be platonic, unemotional, uninvolved. Dating surpasses such casual contacts in the opportunity afforded for intimate, personal acquaintance. This acquaintance helps the individual understand the opposite sex as a group and as individuals.

*As a Group.* In some respects men and women are different, in others the same. Good marriages depend on understanding both the similarities and the differences.

The grosser misconceptions about the opposite sex normally dissolve early in adolescence—the feeling that boys are rough and girls scatterbrained. However, few bachelors can justifiably assert that they know all there is to know about women—or vice versa. Dating provides continuing opportunities for analyzing the subtleties of masculinity and femininity.

*As Individuals.* All members of the opposite sex are not alike. This is an elementary fact for all save the most prejudiced. However, knowing what sort of partner is best for me is a more advanced problem. Each new date provides an experiment in match-making, a chance to discover what makes for compatibility and incompatibility. No matter how much of a failure a date may turn out to be in the usual sense of the word, it adds to the participants' wisdom about their own requirements. Without realizing it, they are sharpening their ability to discriminate between good combinations and poor ones. As a result, they should eventually be able to make wiser decisions about marriage.

The value of contemporary dating is heightened by the congruence between the characteristics sought in dates and those preferred in marriage. This has not always been the case. A generation ago Willard Waller (1937) deplored the discontinuity he observed between dating and marriage. The popular man at Penn State belonged to a fraternity, owned a car and a raccoon coat, and had plenty of money to spend—characteristics hardly related to compatibility in marriage.

Since those days the discrepancies between dating popularity and marriage eligibility have diminished. Whereas in the twenties, dating was

a frivolous game one had to drop out of to get serious, modern dating leads more smoothly toward marriage. No longer is one kind of person preferred for dating and a quite different sort for marriage. Rather, the two sets of preferences are largely identical. For example, a cross-section of University of Michigan students were substantially unanimous in their top preferences for both casual and serious dating partners: (1) be pleasant and cheerful; (2) have a sense of humor; (3) be a good sport; (4) be natural; (5) be considerate; and (6) be neat in appearance (Blood, 1956). Not only has the gap between casual and serious preferences narrowed, but also the focus is now on those characteristics that make for good personal relations both before and after marriage.

Insofar as couples pair off on the basis of personal compatibility (rather than external qualities), dating provides better preparation for mate selection.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Since dating is the premarital situation that corresponds most closely to marriage, it provides constant opportunities to develop interpersonal skills that are useful after marriage. Such lessons are learned on casual dates as well as serious ones.

For example, even a "bad date" with a person one wouldn't think of marrying tests one's maturity in coping with frustrating situations. One student expressed it this way:

Though the chances are that he will marry someone much like himself, practice in understanding and considering other points of view in getting along with other people will help a person get along with his marriage partner when they don't see eye to eye. If in dating an individual is willing to make the effort to get along with someone different from himself even though he may not understand them, he will probably get along better with the people he dates. If he is willing to make the effort in dating to get along, the chances are even better he will try to get along with his marriage partner and make an effort to understand her.

This point of view does not mean that young people should go out of their way to date difficult partners for practice. It does mean that whenever they happen to encounter problems their response helps train them for marriage—for better or for worse.

If this carry-over exists between casual dating and marriage, it is even more true of serious dating. The longer a couple date, the more their interaction pattern reveals and shapes their subsequent behavior in marriage—to each other or to someone else. Since the continuity between serious dating and marriage is easier to see, it may be useful to illustrate how even casual dating provides learning opportunities in marriage-relevant skills.

*Self-Expression.* Probably the biggest deficiency in early dating involves the ability to communicate. This is not a problem in "communication skills" in the Freshman English sense of the term. A shy girl and tongue-tied boy may be perfectly adept in talking—to their own sex. The difficulty in dating results from fear of saying the wrong thing, or making a bad impression, or boring the partner. It reflects emotional frigidity and unwillingness to give of the self for the sake of the partner:

I prefer casual friendships and dating a number of different men rather than going out exclusively with one. For this reason I like group activities more than spending an evening entirely with one person. I seldom share my inner thoughts and feelings. I feel that this leads to a greater involvement with the person in whom I might confide; and this is the type of relationship I am trying to avoid. If I get the impression that a boy I am dating is becoming serious, I quickly end the relationship.

What needs developing is a willingness to commit oneself to the partner—not irrevocably as in marriage but temporarily for the duration of the date. In a rudimentary sort of way this resembles a willingness to love—not in the sense of "falling for" each new date that comes along but of participating fully in the relationship as long as it lasts.

Sociologists used to note the "dallying" that characterized American dating. Young people, Waller suggested, "are careful not to allow their affairs to exceed a certain pitch of emotional intensity, if they can prevent it" (1938: 230). One of the popular techniques for preventing emotional involvement was reliance upon a conventionalized "line" in conversation. Many words were expressed but they were just a game, masking true thoughts and feelings.

Today there is more self-expression in American dating than there used to be. Burgess and Wallin amassed evidence from three studies that demolishes the idea that dalliance is any longer characteristic of American dating (1953: 149). Today there is less fear of emotional involvement. This is another way (besides similar preferences for casual and serious dates) in which our dating system provides better preparation for marriage than it used to. In any case dating is always an opportunity to learn to express one's true self to another.

*Empathy.* Communication is a two-way process. It begins with self-expression, but it is completed only if the partner receives the message. Empathy is the ability to perceive the partner's attitudes and feelings. It differs from sympathy because it doesn't necessarily involve agreement or fellow-feeling with the partner. Empathy is a skill that can be acquired and developed through practice. Dating provides endless opportunities for practice.

Lack of empathy impedes true self-expression, so the relation between empathy and self-expression is reciprocal even within the same person. If I

am afraid I'll "put my foot in my mouth" when I open it, I am too much concerned about my own reputation and too little about my partner's needs. If dating is to be most satisfactory, both partners must express their own needs and be sensitive to the other's.

Dating thrives on empathy in sensing the partner's moods in little things such as when she wants to go home and what she really wants to eat. Skill depends not only on listening to what she says but also on awareness of nonverbal clues in facial expression and manner. A skillful empathizer sees through what she says to the real feelings within. Empathy enables old married couples to sense each other's needs without words. It can begin in dating.

*Decision-Making.* The expressed needs of two persons often conflict. When choices must be made between mutually exclusive preferences, new skills are called upon. Altruism under these circumstances is no solution. If I want to go swimming when she would rather take in a concert, it doesn't help for both of us to say "After you, Alphonse." The techniques of conflict-resolution will be explored in later chapters, so it is not necessary to suggest here how dating deadlocks can be broken. The point is simply that dating provides a wealth of experience in decision-making which equips individuals for settling the problems of marriage too.

Self-expression, empathy, and decision-making are only a few of the skills that can be learned in dating. However, they illustrate how dating inevitably provides opportunities for developing interpersonal skills. The more they are developed in dating, the greater the resources for marriage.

Other ways in which dating prepares for marriage are so intimately linked to the question of readiness for marriage that they will be saved for that chapter—the emotional weaning provided from parents and the sense of having "been around" enough to settle down in concentration on a life-time partner.

*Obstacles to Learning.* Although dating provides learning opportunities, not every couple takes advantage of them. The difference between learning and not learning seems to be more a question of attitude than of activity. When students in two Florida colleges listed the chief conditions that interfere with enjoyment of a date as "the date's lack of interest, uncooperativeness, or being in a bad mood," they were describing attitudes that stultify growth (Connor and Hall, 1952). If learning is to occur the partners must participate fully in the relationship.

Besides attitudes of withholding, a second condition that interferes with learning interpersonal skills is exploitation. When a girl is used for sexual purposes or a boy for financial purposes, free communication and rational decision-making can't be expected. The criteria that a personal relationship should be an end in itself and should involve the *whole* person are violated. Exploitation tends to occur when high-status boys

date low-status girls (Ehrmann, 1955). Given the impetus of the male sex drive and the female wish for a good marriage, exploitation is understandable, but it is a deviant form of behavior more likely to result in mislearning than useful learning from the standpoint of marriage.

**Table 1-1—Actual and Preferred Dating Activities**

Activity	Actually Do Most Frequently on a Date	Like Best to Do on a Date
Go someplace to dance	51%	*
Go someplace to drink	34	12%
Chance to be alone	34	65
Go places where you "can be seen"	30	9
Outdoor activities, picnics, hiking, etc.	24	74
Relax in someone's house, talk, listen to radio, read	18	59
Go to concerts, lectures, discussions	9	28

Totals do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

\* Not asked.

Adapted from Goldsen, 1960: 68. Source: 1,514 Cornell University men in 1950.

Opportunities to learn are partly contingent on the activities engaged in. A college campus may be an ideal place for meeting compatible partners, but Table 1-1 suggests that college facilities often frustrate the development of personal relationships. Parties, dancing, and other group activities are the chief ingredients of campus social life. They are too public and too groupy to enable dating couples to get to know each other thoroughly. The preferred but rarely obtainable circumstances of informal outdoor recreation, indoor relaxation, and chances to be alone together are more conducive to personalized interaction.

## Dating Career Patterns

The career concept can be applied to the entire span of dating which concludes with marriage. Most Americans begin dating in junior high and marry in their early twenties, so this span normally covers six to eight years. Since college students marry later than average, their dating careers often span a whole decade.

*Range.* More significant than the number of years from first to last date is the number of dates. This is more easily specified in terms of number of partners than in the astronomical number of dating events.

The college students reported in Table 1-2 had typically dated twenty-one to thirty members of the opposite sex, but the number varied widely. It may be no accident that variation is more extreme among women than among men. Because girls are handicapped in taking the initiative in dat-

**Table 1-2—Number of Partners Ever Dated by College Men and Women**

<i>Number Ever Dated</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
0-10	8%	12%
11-20	23	20
21-30	22	18
31-50	25	21
Over 50	23	28
Total	101%	99%
No. of cases	160	174

Source: Students enrolled in the University of Michigan marriage course (Sophomores-Seniors) in 1956.

ing, they are more apt to have difficulty being dated by more than ten partners. At the other extreme the most popular girls are dated by unusually large numbers of boys. With the initiative in their hands, boys tend to have a more moderate number of partners.

Presumably those who date less than a dozen partners have less perspective with which to choose their marriage partner. There seems little reason to believe that there is much danger of dating too many persons except in those rare cases where the busy whirl gets in the way of cultivating more intensive relationships with a few.

*Frequency.* Lowrie (1956) reports that high-school students average one date a week, college students (presumably at Bowling Green State University) about two a week, and those going steady three a week. If two a week is typical the contemporary college graduate may have a thousand dates by the time he gets married. This is unquestionably more than his parents and grandparents had. Even engaged couples of a generation ago dated only twice a week while *their* parents dated only once a week during engagement (Koller, 1951). The trend, therefore, is for the dating career to occupy more and more time during adolescence and young adulthood.

How extensive this career is, however, depends on the available opportunities. In most high schools this is no problem, but in some colleges the sex ratio is so skewed that dating opportunities for the minority sex are severely limited. For instance, Ehrmann (1959: 41) found at the University of Florida that male students (who outnumbered women students eight to one) only managed half as many dates per week. Much of that was necessarily away from campus. For students at one-sex colleges the limitations on dating are even more severe. Confined to weekend expeditions, their intensive dating may offset the low frequency. This pattern, however, inevitably lacks the naturalness and informality of dating on a coeducational campus:

While I was attending an Eastern girls' school for two years, my dating pattern was quite different than it has been here at the university. Our social life was definitely confined to weekends as a consequence of distance between



the schools. Blind dates were much more frequent because opportunities for meeting boys were limited. During the Fall there was a mass exodus to men's schools for football weekends, and when winter arrived the tables were turned and the boys invaded our campus.

Here at the university I have dated more and met a greater diversity of people than ever before. I enjoy the casualness of the atmosphere here.

Even where there are plenty of members of the opposite sex at hand, ethnic or religious restrictions may make them ineligible for marriage and perhaps for dating. Whenever circumstances make dating difficult, the dating career suffers unless compensatory efforts are made to travel to places where eligible dating partners can be found.

In addition to the sex ratio, a factor that affects the opportunity for dating is fraternity or sorority membership. Nonmembership does not prevent dating, but membership appreciably facilitates it (see Table 1-3).

**Table 1-3—Effect of Fraternity Membership on Dating Frequency**

Dating Frequency	Fraternity Members	Independent Men
None	7%	20%
Less than once a month	22	28
Once or twice a month	36	26
At least once a week	35	26
Total	100%	100%
No. of cases	704	650

Adapted from Goldsen, 1960: 70–71. Source: Cornell University, 1950.

The most striking effect of fraternity membership is to reduce the percentage who don't date at all. Organized social life may not provide the most intimate setting for dating, but at least it guarantees a minimal amount. Members who lack the initiative to secure their own dates can have matches arranged for them by the house social chairman. Exchange dinners between fraternities and sororities also provide an organized framework for dating. For independent students dating is just as possible but less common since it takes more initiative and effort.

*Criteria for Success.* Are there any criteria for success in dating careers?

Inadequate careers can be seen most easily in extreme cases. At one extreme is a college senior who dated only one person in his life:

I didn't get around to dating in high school. When I got to college I met Alice in my Freshman English class and we started going together. We've been going together ever since and get along pretty well. But now that we're scheduled to get married in August, I'm suddenly full of doubts. I feel as though I don't know for sure if she's the right one for me. She wouldn't like it one bit, but I sometimes wonder whether I shouldn't start dating some other girls just to help me make up my mind.

This student suffered the consequences of never having played the field. If he had dated other girls, he would have a better idea how well his choice measured up.

At the other extreme are those who date dozens of people but never go with any of them long enough to get well acquainted. When dating relationships remain superficial, neither compatibility testing, emotional weaning, nor the learning of human relations skills is likely to progress very much. Since first dates are formal, it takes a continuing relationship with one person to get to know him really well.

Numerically, therefore, dating careers should include enough partners to provide a background for marital choice and enough dating experience to provide a chance to learn the skills of personal interaction. Since marriage involves a long-term commitment to one partner, it is useful to do some dating on a steady basis. However, the growing popularity of steady dating has yet to raise the typical number beyond one or two other than the marriage partner (Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 127). A successful dating career is therefore extensive enough to give perspective and intensive enough to give intimacy.

## Personal Relations in Dating

Three major issues arise in connection with dating: initiative in dating, the proper role of each sex, and exclusiveness in dating.

### PROBLEMS OF INITIATIVE

Getting started in dating is a serious problem for those few young people who rarely or never date anyone. It also concerns the much larger number who break up with old partners and must get started all over again. One of the major deterrents to ending unsatisfactory relationships is reluctance to face the task of resuming dating "on the open market."

First dates have an extra excitement that reflects underlying tensions and anxieties. The chief source of anxiety between new partners is the uncertainty whether they will be compatible. Both partners hope the occasion will go well. Beyond that is the hope that this new person will fulfill their fondest dreams. When such dreams are disappointed, it is not easy to dismiss the mismatching as "one of those things." Rather it tends to be felt as a personal failure. Besides being disappointed with the partner, each is even more aware of the other's disappointment with him.

Hence first dates take place under strain. Each partner tries valiantly to impress the other. The first impression has to be good because it will prejudice subsequent attitudes toward each other.

Sometimes anxiety about the occasion is so intense that it paralyzes

both partners. So great is the fear of saying the wrong thing that nothing is said.

With increased experience reliance shifts from the safety of saying nothing to the safety of the conventional "line." If I say the same things everyone else does, then I can't go far wrong. True, the relationship will not become very personal as long as it is so undistinctive, but at least the conventional pattern provides a secure framework until the relationship can grow of its own accord.

*Ways of Reducing Initial Strain.* Certain types of dates involve less strain than others, as do certain forms of dating behavior.

Structuring the dating situation to take the emphasis off the weak, unformed pair-relationship reduces anxiety. This can be achieved in group-dating situations: parties, dances, and double-dating. If one couple's morale suffers from incompatible pairing, the rest of the group offers distraction and compensation. Strain on the relationship is thus diffused into a larger complex of relationships.

Strain can be limited in duration by making the first date with a stranger a chance to get acquainted over coffee rather than plunging blind into a whole evening or weekend of paired activities.

Tension is reduced too by guaranteeing in advance as much compatibility as possible. Anxiety about the unknown vanishes when dates are chosen from old friends at work, in clubs and classes, and the like. If dating must be arranged, the best matchmaker is one who knows both partners well and can predict their compatibility with some accuracy. Least satisfactory of all is a truly "blind" date where nothing more than chance availability brings the couple together.

Parties and dances serve a dual function. Besides providing a shock-absorbing group environment for new couples, they also provide programmed activities. Movies, concerts, and ballgames have the same value. Since something outside the couple is going on, the conversational resources of the two individuals are only marginally tested. Instead of having to entertain each other all the time, they must do so only during intermissions.

There is thus a kind of social wisdom in the conventional patterns for first dates. Since a new couple's skills are unknown, it is better not to test them too much at first. Informal, private dates can come later. After they get to know each other, they can explore their preferred activities. Better not to test unknown decision-making skills by arguing about where to go and what to do on the first date. Better to let the fellow decide as customary. Questions about paying for dates, similarly, can be raised later—if ever. For the beginning, doing the expected is the path of least resistance.

Once the date begins, the idea that uncertain compatibility is the basis for anxiety suggests a useful strategy. The sooner there can be feedback

of reassuring information from the experience the better. The end of the date is a long time to wait to learn that the partner enjoyed the occasion. Of course, some feedback comes through facial expressions and other nonverbal indications. But the sooner compliments can be expressed on the partner's dancing ability, the sooner he will be able to relax, knowing he is accepted. Mere flattery sounds hollow or produces a false sense of compatibility from which the couple may later have to extricate themselves, but genuine appreciation puts the partner at ease.

*Male Initiative.* Custom dictates that the initiative for dates ordinarily should come from the man. While this gives him a treasured freedom of action, it also means a burden of responsibility. Boys often wish girls would share this burden, but the girls are just as glad not to have to. In one study of high-school students a majority of the boys thought "it would be a good thing if girls could be as free" as boys in asking for dates, but two-thirds of the girls disagreed (Christensen, 1952). Young people of all ages wish the other sex were more friendly and more easily accessible.

It takes a certain amount of self-confidence to ask a new girl for a date. Those most lacking in self-confidence are the same ones, unfortunately, whose egos suffer most in case they are rejected. For the fearful few the methods of tension-reduction suggested above are especially appropriate. However, in extreme cases of shyness a boy may not even know any girls he could ask for a date. This condition most often arises among students at men's colleges or in fields of study or work where women are rare. Under these circumstances it might be unduly frightening to plunge into blind dating, especially if underlying sexual anxieties are involved. Better to concentrate on platonic friendships with girls, first. Church groups, hobbies, and clubs offer opportunities for getting acquainted gradually on the basis of common interests. Personal friendships that arise spontaneously among the members of these groups provide a solid basis for eventual dating and love, even though the love may not be flashy or spectacular. In those rare cases of individuals who never marry, interest-group friendships can still provide significant personal relationships in life.

For some boys and girls the inhibitions to dating go so deep into past emotional conditioning that only professional therapy seems likely to overcome them. The following case happens to be a girl, but similar fears are not less common among boys (though the dynamics may be different):

I am the youngest of three children and the only girl. I never played with my brothers though they often teased me. I played by myself except when my cousin Carole and I were together. I was very shy, afraid of people in general but particularly of boys who were rough. They were always running, not caring who they ran into, yelling, fighting, etc., and I was afraid of getting

hurt. I never had any real dates until I was out of high school. I think I was asked a couple of times but I didn't care for the boys that asked me. It is strange that though I wanted very much to have dates, I was more scared to have them. I never spoke to boys unless I had to—I was afraid of them.

While boys don't have to worry about the roughness of girls, they sometimes fear their seductiveness. Because of harsh parental attitudes toward sex, anything remotely sexual in nature may be disgusting. So the nondater plays it safe by avoiding social contacts that might expose his inadequacies and arouse his unconscious fears.

My mother always taught me, "Never kiss a girl until you are almost engaged." Therefore, my general attitudes were very prudish. As a result of this I developed a brotherly attitude and have had this relationship with most girls. They tell me their troubles and ask my advice. Most of the time I am satisfied with this.

Such an emotionally inhibited person is often tied to his parents' apron strings. Dominated or overprotected by his parents, he has been unable to grow to maturity. Such parents often actively discourage dating. More corrosively they undermine the child's self-confidence and self-respect.

The nondater may claim he's not interested in "that stuff." He may throw himself into other activities on campus—his studies, athletics, extracurricular organizations. Perhaps he asserts a preference for platonic friendships with the opposite sex, for pure camaraderie where sex makes no difference. This philosophy is apt to be a rationalization. People often invent "reasons" to cover up inner inadequacies and anxieties.

In early adolescence inner conflicts and inhibitions are common. If they still persist into the later teens, they deserve professional help, which may release normal desires for personal relations with the opposite sex.

*Female Initiative.* In view of the cultural ban on female initiative, shy or unpopular girls are seriously handicapped. To a considerable extent they are at the mercy of boys and must wait and hope that someone will be interested enough to make the first move. If their physical appearance is unattractive, they are extra handicapped since prejudices caused by first impressions are difficult to overcome. Dieting, exercise, and plastic surgery sometimes reduce this barrier, but adolescent skin difficulties may have to be waited out.

Unpopularity can seldom be blamed entirely on male disinterest, though the temptation is beguiling. It's easy to rationalize a situation in which the other sex is supposed to carry the responsibility. Nevertheless, girls can make themselves available and can even take initiative within limits.

Availability is partly a question of propinquity, that is, going where eligible men are. Unbalanced sex ratios occur not only on certain campuses but also in certain occupations (farming *vs.* teaching) and certain communities (Wallace, 1960). Vacation cruises may offer concen-

trated doses of contact with men, but marriage-type dating is more apt to emerge from friendships born of long-term association. Coeducational schools, jobs, organizations, and communities guarantee availability over a longer period of time.

Besides sheer propinquity, availability reflects attitudes and behavior. Passivity does not invite dates. For boys who hesitate to initiate contacts, girls can pave the way by being warm, outgoing, and friendly:

In high school I was pretty lonely. Finally in college I came to my senses—perhaps because I knew that time was short. Only one or two more years and I would be a career woman or, to put it brutally, an old maid. In the university were men galore. I began to see that to make myself more available I had to do more than sit by the telephone and wait for a call. I had to learn to go halfway in being friendly, to be genuinely interested in these boys, to care enough about their interests, to show a little warmth and enthusiasm. Perhaps I was learning to treat them as human beings. As I warmed up, they reciprocated.

Even though overt female initiative is generally taboo, there are exceptions. Coed living groups and extracurricular organizations sponsor “girl-bid” dances and parties where the invitations are theirs to extend. In some circles a girl can say to a fellow (as casually as possible!), “I just happen to have two tickets to a play tomorrow night and my roommate has taken sick. Would you like to go in her place?” The boy may accept even though he rightly suspects the whole story is a fabrication. His face is saved as long as the girl discreetly avoids pursuing him openly.

Another problem for women is how to secure a “rain check” when a boy’s first invitation can’t be accepted. Because unwanted dates are normally declined with polite excuses, a legitimate excuse may easily be misinterpreted as a rebuff. Hence, a new inquirer needs to be explicitly encouraged to call again. Awareness of a girl’s receptivity after or before a first inquiry can sometimes be spread discreetly by the rumor grapevine.

With discretion so necessary with respect to dating as such, the chief area for feminine initiative remains the friendliness out of which more intimate relationships tend to grow.

#### SEX ROLES IN DATING

We have already dealt with one difference in the dating roles of men and women in discussing initiative. The sexes agree much more about who should pay for dates. Only a small minority believe in “dutch-dating,” and payment by the girl alone is even more taboo (Christensen, 1952). Willingness to spend money freely is one symbol of a man’s affection for his girl. Sharing expenses seems like unwillingness to give on his part and unwillingness to receive on hers, both forms of resistance to mutual involvement.

Our increasing affluence makes money less and less a problem in dating. As long as the man has plenty of money, there is no reason why he shouldn't spend it (even though sociologists might wonder about the implications of the increasing employment of women; see, for example, Harper, 1948: 88-9).

Difficulties may arise under marginal circumstances. If a date isn't exactly a date, what norm should apply? If a boy and girl "just happen" to sit together at the lunch counter, his obligation to pay for her coffee depends on whether they think of it as a date. If her view of the situation differs from his, misunderstandings will arise:

I happened to bump into a girl from my psych class at the Sugar Bowl last week so we had cokes together. We've never dated and she's only a vague acquaintance. Just to be courteous I picked up her check and went over to pay for it. But she came along and said, "You shouldn't do that. I can perfectly well pay for it." Sure she could. But I'd have been a lot happier if she'd just thanked me instead of creating a scene.

Easier for him, yes, but under ambiguous circumstances, the girl's concern is to avoid imposing herself on a casual acquaintance. The norms of courtesy for the two sexes conflict on the margin between dating and not dating.

What if the man's financial resources are limited? Then conventional dating may be restricted, but inexpensive activities are still possible. Better to stroll in the moonlight than not date at all—affection itself is more important than the money that symbolizes it.

After couples have dated long enough to accept each other as persons, they become more "realistic" about money. The longer they go together, the less likely they are to let ancient traditions stand in the way of having a good time. Sharing or even total financing by the girl then becomes the best way of making collective use of their mutual resources. However, public face-saving is still desirable. She should transfer her funds to him in private so they can maintain the appearance of conventionality.

Less directly, girls contribute financially through gifts. Koller (1951) found that although women in every generation received more than they gave, the balance is approaching equality. In fact, in the present generation "the young women were in many cases giving more gifts to the men than they received in turn."

*Dating Formalities.* More than most circumstances in life, dating calls into play the niceties of social behavior: male chivalry at its best—opening the door for the girl, walking on the street side of the sidewalk, rising when girls enter the room—and table manners for both sexes. Like spending money these are symbolic means of showing consideration for the partner. Breaches of etiquette early in dating are damaging. Either

they proclaim improper up-bringing (raising doubts about family background) or they are interpreted as disregard for the partner's welfare.

Dates with a new partner depend heavily on fulfilling social expectations in the absence of knowledge of the individual person. As acquaintance increases, behavior becomes more individuated. Partners who prove to be unconventional can be treated accordingly:

Joe and I just don't believe in all that old folderol about the guy running around the car to open the door for the girl. We treat each other as equals and like it a lot better that way. None of that lady and gentleman stuff for us.

As a relationship develops, both partners adapt their behavior to fulfill the other's needs. Such adaptation may modify traditional sex roles considerably. The danger in unconventional conduct, however, is that it may abandon the spirit of considerateness along with the archaic forms. Courtesy consists essentially in going out of one's way to be nice to the partner. The very fact that the male animal tends to be rough and unfeeling is why the code of etiquette focuses mainly on him. The essence of a personal relationship lies precisely in concern and sympathy for the partner. Conventional behavior helps guarantee that the man will at least appear to be concerned pending the time when the real thing can develop. Then appearances can be discarded or not as the couple see fit.

It would be wrong to assume that social conventions and personal needs normally conflict. For well-socialized people they usually coincide. If one partner needs to be unconventional and the other to be conventional, it will be difficult to achieve a satisfactory relationship. Then, at least one partner must be able to adapt his behavior to the other's counter-need if their relationship is to develop satisfactorily:

Alan wanted to be chivalrous to me but I didn't want to accept it. For example, one evening when we went to a movie, I ran out of the house and jumped into the car. He was very irritated and said so. After several such episodes we finally talked it over. I told him it embarrassed me to act the clinging vine. I confessed that because of my size, most boys had not felt particularly protective toward me, so I had assumed the façade of a happily independent girl as a defense. Alan explained to me that he had learned most of his social graces the hard way since his family didn't have them. Once the truth was out, we knew a greater closeness as I learned the pleasure of leaning a little and he had the satisfaction of showing off his social accomplishments to an admiring audience.

*Women and Intellectuality.* College women of superior ability are sometimes torn between their femininity and their intellectuality. This role conflict seems to be decreasing with the spread of an equalitarian philosophy among the younger generation (Komarovsky, 1946; Wallin, 1950). Nevertheless, some girls still worry about the impact of their academic prowess on their dating eligibility and a small segment of high-



average girls actually do date comparatively seldom (Goldsen, 1960: 216).

It is true, of course, that superior brains deprive such girls of the opportunity to date boys less intelligent than themselves. On the other hand, this is part of the process of mate-selection. Were they to marry inferior men, intellectual incompatibility would result. Being natural about intelligence is one prerequisite for developing full person-to-person relationships. Though less capable men may be repelled, equally capable ones will not.

How then do we explain the fact that smart women have noticeably more difficulty in dating (and marrying) anyone? Some are the victims of circumstances. Men may not *prefer* inferior wives, but enough of them happen to date down the intelligence scale to leave their feminine equals stranded.

In other cases the dynamics of intellectual unpopularity are different. Academic achievement (like social mobility) is sometimes a compensation for inadequacy in personal relations. Girls unskilled in personal relationships may seek substitute gratification along occupational lines (Ellis, 1952). Their lack of dates is more nearly cause than consequence of high achievement. Sometimes too intellectuality is their defense against emotional involvement or their weapon in the "battle of the sexes." In such extreme cases popularity with the opposite sex understandably suffers. Provided this is not the case, there is no reason for women to pretend to be dumb.

The striking differences between men and women in the initiation and control of sexual activities in dating will be discussed in Chapter 5.

#### EXCLUSIVENESS IN DATING

A major controversy rages around the question of steady dating. This discussion does not arise in a vacuum but reflects the changing pattern of American dating. The older generation used to "play the field" until they were ready to settle down and get married. Steady dating was reserved for serious affairs that led to engagement and marriage.

The younger generation has only partly substituted steady dating for random dating. (Michigan students with seldom more than two or three steadies in their portfolio have dated ten times as many persons altogether.) The big change is that going steady is no longer necessarily serious. This is difficult for parents to understand:

My boy has been going steady with his girl for a year and a half now. He never dates anyone else and spends practically all his waking hours with her. And yet when I ask him, "Are you in love with her?" he says, "No, we just like to be together."

Other couples might say they were in love and yet add that they were not committed to marriage. Although marriage may follow steady dating, it doesn't necessarily do so. Engagements are supposed to lead to marriage. Steady dating isn't supposed to lead to anything. It's just an end in itself.

One consequence of this casualization of exclusiveness is that steady dating is no longer confined to the latter part of the dating career. It may occur at any point along the way. Among University of Wisconsin students it had occurred more often in high school than in college (Herman, 1955). This depends, however, on group norms in the local school or community. From the historical point of view the separation of steady dating from serious intentions is simply a logical extension of the earlier separation of short-term dating from seriousness.

*Values in Steady Dating.* Some critics of steady dating feel it is merely a source of emotional security for immature adolescents. This criticism certainly touches upon one of the values involved. If first dates create extra tension, going steady provides one means of escape.

However, more than escape is involved. There is a different quality to the relationship:

Going steady was a convenience—it meant a chance to relax, to be ourselves, and to indulge in sexual play because we loved each other and had known each other a long time.

Steady dating is more intimate, that is, it provides more of a personal relationship. In many ways, therefore, it is better preparation for marriage than playing the field. In particular there is more opportunity to practice interpersonal skills.

Going steady often involves greater sexual intimacy for girls but less for boys (Riesman, 1958; confirmed in Ehrmann, 1959: 134). In any case the quality of the intimacy changes from one of casual exploitation: "In random dating an individual is allowed to move from one partner to another, rarely establishing any personal attachments; there is less inhibition, possibly, to the *using* of dating partners as instruments for one's own selfish gratification. It may be that going steady, by virtue of its being less temporary, impersonal, and competitive, is capable of inhibiting or reducing the motivations for the exploitation of one person by his partner" (Herman, 1955).

Steady dating therefore offers on an intensified basis most of the marriage-preparation values we earlier suggested are provided by dating in general.

I took dating very seriously and never went with a girl I truly was not interested in. From each new girl I learned something more about the members of the opposite sex as well as more about myself. I learned what it felt like to be stood up, made a fool of, domineered, thrown over, and strung along; as well as being loved, cared for, admired, respected, trusted, and made

secure. I dated each girl long enough to learn their good and bad points, my mistakes, how they treated me, and how they expected me to treat them.

*Pitfalls in Steady Dating.* The chief danger involved in steady dating is premature commitment to the wrong partner. This does not usually occur since, as we have already suggested, steady dating is normally nonserious in intent. Nor, in actual practice, does steady dating usually prevent broad experience. Table 1-4 shows quite the opposite, that those with the most steady partners also have the most casual partners. Turned around the other way, the larger the number of casual partners, the greater the chances of going steady with a few of them. In other words casual and steady dating are nicely balanced in the average individual's total dating pattern.

**Table 1-4—Consequences of Steady Dating for Total Number of Dating Partners**

	NUMBER OF STEADY RELATIONSHIPS					Total
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	
Median number of individuals ever dated	18	22	34	35	44	30
Percentage of total cases	15%	26%	28%	16%	15%	100%

Source: 264 men and women students enrolled in University of Michigan Marriage course, 1960-61.

However, there are exceptions. Premature commitment is a real danger for couples who prolong their first steady relationship in the absence of comparative experience. When a couple go together year after year, they subconsciously take the relationship for granted. Moreover, family and friends get so used to seeing them together that unintended social pressure helps to keep them together.

I lived just a block away from Gretchen and our families were close friends. We went together all through high school and junior college. Then I went away to the university and fell in love with the girl who is now my wife. When they heard about it, my family and Gretchen's were both shocked, and Gretchen came close to having a nervous breakdown. The whole gang at home accused me of being unchivalrous in letting her down this way. But we weren't engaged and I couldn't see why everybody kicked up such a fuss.

This particular couple escaped the danger of marrying by default. High-school steadies rarely happen to be the ideal marriage partner, especially when one partner goes on to college and the other does not.

The new system of steady dating normally offers the advantages of exclusiveness without the disadvantages of premature commitment. This does not mean that dating careers should consist entirely of steady dating. But occasional episodes with unusually compatible partners add depth to dating experience that the old system lacked. Hence, dating now provides better preparation for marriage than it used to.

# *Choosing a Marriage Partner*

## To Choose or Not to Choose

From the romantic point of view marriages are "made in heaven." People are "destined" to marry each other, brought together by "fate," "mysteriously attracted to each other," and marry even if families, friends, and their own minds demur. To the romanticist the idea of qualifications for marriage partners is distasteful. Choosing a suitable partner sounds coldly calculating. Images are evoked of heartless measurements and impersonal checklists. Disgusting!

In actual practice more couples are thrown together by sheer accident than by either the magic of romance or the strategy of intelligence. The typical young adult drifts along assuming that sooner or later he will get married. He dates, will-o-the-wisp, whoever attracts his fancy. Chance largely determines whom he dates. And, as expected, sooner or later he marries someone.

To some extent both emotional and chance factors influence every pairing off in marriage. The questions remain, however, whether the individual can guide his own destiny by rational thought and whether deliberate choice produces more satisfactory results than romantic fatalism or blind drifting.

Marriage is one of the three great events in life—along with birth and death. Birth just happens to us, and death too is largely beyond our

control. Concerning marriage, however, we can have much to say. We decide whom we shall marry, when, and sometimes how. By far the most crucial of these decisions is the first.

In a society where many marriages fail the marriage counselor feels that he often sees troubled couples too late. If they had never married in the first place, much grief might have been spared. If they had been better matched, they would have experienced a richer life. To a considerable extent the marriage die is cast in the process of mate-selection. Not with respect to skill and effort but by definition as far as potential compatibility is concerned, the destiny of a marriage is settled when the partnership is arranged.

## The Nature of Compatibility

In the Introduction we defined a couple as compatible when their intrinsic characteristics as individuals fit together in a mutually beneficial combination. Countless dimensions of compatibility could be discussed. Those we have selected are *personal* compatibility in temperament, needs, role-conceptions, and values. Reserved for Chapter 3 is the question of *social* compatibility raised by mixed marriages.

### TEMPERAMENTAL COMPATIBILITY

By temperament we mean the physiological activity and response pattern of the individual. Little research has been done to determine the role of these constitutional factors in mate-selection and marital success. However, Wallace (1960) points out that the behavior-controlling glands of one normal individual may be five to ten times as active as those of another equally healthy individual. He believes that "such biological differences help to explain many of the common problems and conflicts in mating and marriage: why one spouse is always active—bubbling with excess energy—and the other is inactive, quiet, and phlegmatic; why one spouse can't get going until late afternoon and doesn't want to go to bed before midnight, and the other works best in the morning and likes to go to bed early; why one partner wants sexual intercourse daily, or twice daily, and the other finds weekly or even monthly intercourse adequate."

Wallace's illustrations imply that temperamental differences cause serious discrepancies in married couples' daily routines and leisure-time preferences. If this reasoning is correct, temperamental compatibility requires similarity between husband and wife; that is, the more alike two people are in temperament, the more compatible they will be.

Probably temperamental differences are one repercussion of marriage

between partners who differ markedly in age. The older partner is likely to have less physical vitality—to be less interested in mountain climbing, tennis, or having children around than his younger spouse.

On the other hand, a certain advantage may accrue if the wife is somewhat older than her husband. This stems from the six-year difference in the life expectancy of men and women. If the typical husband were six years younger than his wife, they would live out their lives together. By contrast, the contemporary American husband averages several years older than his wife; this adds to her years of widowhood.

### COMPATIBILITY OF NEEDS

All animals are born with physical needs, especially those for food and sex. The goal of both needs is tension-reduction. Food reduces the hunger drive and sexual climax releases sexual tension.

In the course of growing up human beings also acquire social needs. Through reward and punishment children learn to value some persons and activities as sources of psychological anxiety-reduction. Since parents are the chief source of reward and punishment, they are the primary source of social needs.

Since much of this learning occurs in early childhood, these needs are often unconscious, that is, the individual is not aware of them. They can to some extent be raised to the level of consciousness through the development of insight. Presumably, the more aware an individual is of his own needs, the more intelligently he can choose his marriage partner.

Hidden needs are especially difficult to recognize when they are masked by reaction formations. The son of an overprotective mother may need to be submissive. However, in American society males are not supposed to be submissive. So he may react in the opposite direction with vigorous attempts to dominate others. Similarly, a girl with an underlying need to dominate may react into studied submissiveness.

Anyone whose conscious needs are a result of reaction formation from his unconscious needs is in a difficult position when it comes to mate-selection. For example, a reactively domineering male is likely to choose a submissive wife who fails to meet his underlying dependency needs. Such problems of incompatibility are most effectively avoided through psychotherapy, which enables the individual to accept his underlying motivation pattern rather than to fear it.

Having noted the complexities caused by unconscious needs and by reaction formations, we shall proceed to ignore them from now on. For the sake of simplicity we will deal with needs as if they were always conscious and direct.

Two main types of social needs are relevant to mate-selection. Complementary needs must be opposite in order to be compatible.

Parallel needs require similarity for compatibility. In both cases compatibility means that in the very act of fulfilling his partner's needs, the individual's own needs are met too.

*Complementary Needs.* The most important form of complementary needs involves *dominance* and *submissiveness* (Winch, 1958). Insofar as one partner needs to dominate others, he tends to marry and to have his need most easily gratified by someone who needs to be submissive. The more dominant the one is, the more submissive the other should be for maximum compatibility.

I need someone to check my impulsiveness. I can never say no or refuse a favor. Besides I overestimate my physical capacities. Consequently, I am always trying to do too many things at one time, and I end up running around in circles, not knowing which way to turn. Bob is always able to straighten me out and help me find the right direction. I depend on his ability to extricate me from my own maneuverings. I wouldn't be surprised if he gets a kick out of straightening me out too.

This wife's submissiveness gets her into outside-the-family trouble she depends on her husband to resolve through his own forcefulness. He, in turn, gets a sense of accomplishment from her dependence on him. This combination of dominant husband and submissive wife was once the prescribed pattern of our society. With lingering social approval, it still meets the partners' personal needs in a socially acceptable fashion.

What about a man who needs to be submissive? As an individual he needs a domineering wife. Yet if he marries such a woman he is likely to be considered henpecked. When personal needs and social pressures conflict, marriages are not as happy as when personal needs fit social expectations (Blood and Wolfe, 1960). Nevertheless, compatible needs may be more important than social pressure for those forced to choose:

Mom in a sense rules the roost in our home. She produces an atmosphere that is quite secure in comparison to the outside world. She reacts in reliably similar ways to situations of stress or happiness and seems to produce a place of refuge for daddy when he gets tired of the outside world.

As long as the wife's dominance is confined to the home, social repercussions are minimized.

If both marriage partners need to dominate, the explosive result is easily foreseen. As each seeks to dominate the other, competition intensifies into open conflict. Instead of meeting each other's needs, such couples vie for top position in the marriage. Perennial conflict is the normal result of these circumstances.

I wish my wife would leave the store alone. She keeps coming over and acting like she owns the place. Unfortunately right now the business is incorporated in both our names which she uses as an excuse to meddle in it.

When I suggested that it be put in my name only, she accused me of trying to put something over on her. I've tried to get her to sign an agreement that she won't come over to the store any more, but she won't do that either.

When both partners need to be submissive, the relationship may be equally frustrating, though less dramatic. If neither partner is able to make decisions or to provide warmth and reassurance, the marriage will be hollow and disquieting.

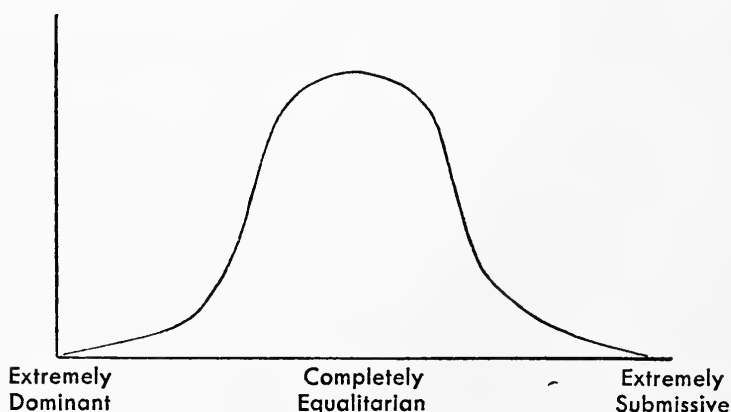
Whether both are dominating or both submissive, competitive marriages mean each partner is seeking what the other cannot give. Hence such marriages are characterized by chronic frustration of the participants' basic needs.

So far we have assumed that people are either dominant or submissive. But most people are neither. The average American falls midway between these extremes. Rather than wishing to dominate or be dominated, he prefers to give and take in a fifty-fifty relationship. Such a person needs an equally equalitarian spouse:

Fran and I have been married ten years now and we really have a good time together. She's a very capable girl and I have a lot of respect for her. She gives a lot of leadership in community affairs just as I do—not necessarily in the same organizations but just as significant. It means a lot to both of us to be able to talk things over with each other, to share our achievements and troubles with someone else. When one of us is down in the dumps, the other cheers him up. All in all it's been a good marriage.

Is an equalitarian marriage an exception to the general idea that authority needs should be complementary? At first glance yes, but with more detailed analysis such a marriage fits the same general scheme.

Percentage of the Total Population



**Figure 2-1. Theoretical Distribution of Authority Need in the General Population**

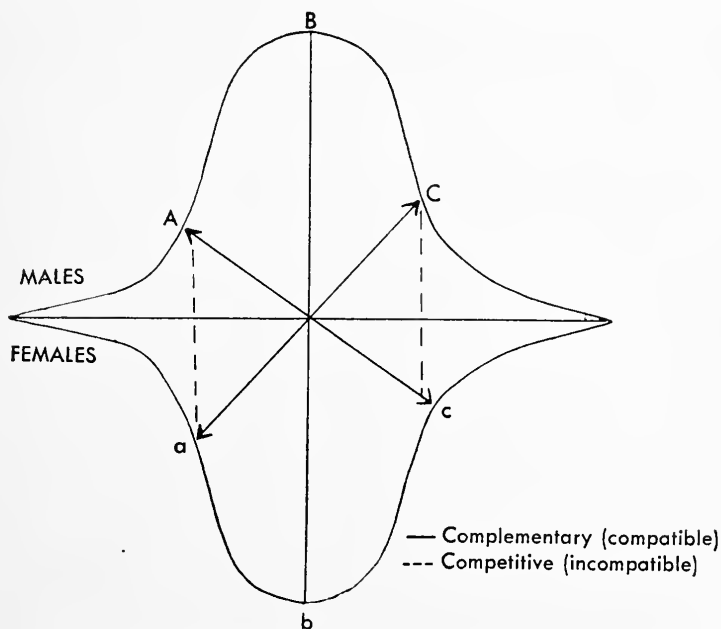


First let us illustrate by Figure 2-1 the presumed distribution of dominant, equalitarian, and submissive persons in the American population. Those who have studied statistics will recognize that this variable is "normally" distributed; that is, most people fall in the middle of the range, and there are steadily fewer cases toward either extreme.

To simplify our task of illustrating compatible mate-selection, we shall ignore the possibility that sex differences in the socialization process make the average woman more submissive than the average man. Let us assume, rather, that the distributions for men and women are mirror images of each other (see Fig. 2-2). Who would be the ideal marriage partner for a dominant man and woman (A and a), for an equalitarian man and woman (B and b), and for a submissive man and woman (C and c)? The ideal wife for dominant male A is submissive female c. Similarly B-b and C-a are compatible marriages based on complementary needs. B-b is simply a special case of complementarity in which the husband and wife happen to be identical in their needs.

Conversely, the competitive combinations in Figure 2-2 are A-a and C-c.

Complementarity resembles a pinwheel from the visual point of view. The more one partner departs in one direction from the center, the farther in the opposite direction is the complementary partner to be found.



**Figure 2-2. Complementary and Competitive Mate-Selection**

The same pinwheel relationship applies to several other needs Winch has studied. For instance, marriage involves *nurturance* and *succorance*. Some individuals need to nurture others, that is, "to give sympathy and aid to a weak, helpless, ill or dejected person" (Winch, 1958: 90). Others have the complementary need for succorance; that is, "to be helped by a sympathetic person; to be nursed, loved, protected, indulged." A man with a strong need to nurture would be compatible with a wife with a correspondingly strong need to receive succorance. However, the average man and woman are presumably B-b types on Figure 2-2, capable of both nurturing and being nurtured in turn as need arises.

A third pair of complementary needs is *deference* and *recognition*. Some individuals need to admire and praise others. Such a person would be gratified through marrying someone with a corresponding need to "excite the admiration and approval of others."

This list might be extended further. Suffice it to say that these complementary needs seem to fit together in "assertive" and "receptive" clusters (Winch: 333). In general an assertive man needs to marry a receptive woman and vice versa.

*Parallel Needs.* If all needs were complementary, there would be only one master clue to compatibility. However other important needs are based on the opposite principle.

Complementary needs determine how the two partners treat each other. If marriage were the whole of life, complementary needs might be the only kind.

However the husband is heavily involved in the occupational system. His activities outside the family provide alternative sources of gratification. Needs that are not gratified by his wife can be met by his work. Indeed, some needs are more easily gratified outside the family than in it. For example, *achievement* in our technological society is measured primarily in economic terms and secondarily in terms of social power and prestige. Hence the need to achieve must almost by definition be satisfied outside the home.

To be a success in the outside world, a man must invest time and energy in that external role. As a result his family roles tend to be neglected. What kind of wife would be ideal for him? Are there women who would appreciate his success rather than feeling neglected? Are there women who would prefer an ambitious man to one who spent his spare time relaxing around home? The wife of an ambitious man needs to be success-oriented herself. She need not necessarily be actively engaged in public affairs, but she must at least gain a sense of vicarious satisfaction from her husband's triumphs.

Applying Figure 2-2 to people ranging from high to low achievement need, the proper wife for high achiever "A" would be achievement-oriented "a." At the other extreme a C-c marriage would involve two

partners equally satisfied with the status quo and unconcerned about keeping up with the Joneses. In contrast to the "pinwheel" feature of complementary needs the analogy here might be to a "plumb line" since all compatible combinations are perpendicular.

A special case of achievement need is what Winch calls *status* aspiration or status striving. Again both partners need to be equally mobility-oriented or else the mobile partner is likely to become disgusted with the stable one, and vice versa.

To some extent the opposite of achievement need is the need for *affiliation*, that is, to be close to other persons. Sexual and love-making activities rate high on the scale of values of affiliative couples. They prize each other's company and would feel slighted or neglected if married to an externally oriented spouse.

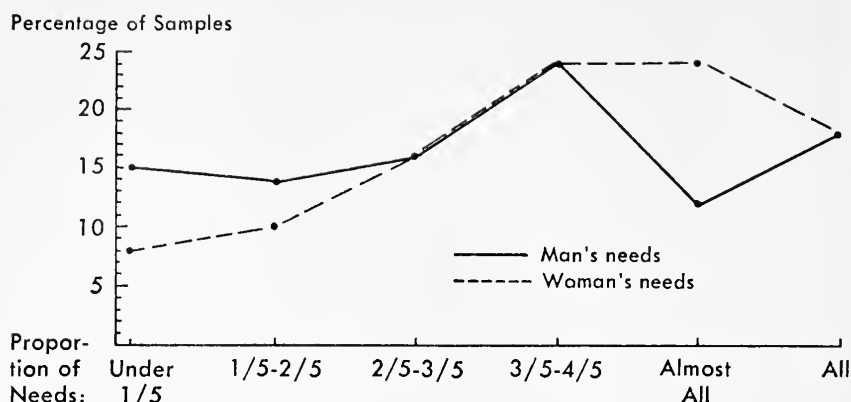
Parallel needs are concerned with inward or outward orientation. Are the partners primarily concerned with their personal relationship to one another or are they interested in getting ahead in the outside world? Compatibility requires that they be oriented in the same direction.

*Multiple Needs.* So far we have discussed only one need at a time. But people have a variety of needs, so the problem of match-making is complex. For example, a woman who needs to dominate others and also desires upward social mobility faces a quandary. Any husband who is dependent enough to satisfy her need to dominate is not likely to be a very successful breadwinner. So she must either choose between her needs or compromise on both of them.

In general, choices are affected by the relative intensity of various needs. The more intense the need, the more emphasis it deserves in the search for a compatible partner. On the other hand, marital compatibility may be less crucial for externally oriented needs than for marriage-oriented ones. Presumably the chief problem for an ambitious man is to choose the right corporation, not the right wife. So the stronger the need and the more marriage-oriented its satisfaction, the more important compatibility is in that area.

It is rare to find a married person who feels that all his needs are satisfied by his partner. Even when Strauss restricted his investigation to person-oriented needs by asking about needs for "someone" to provide various personal services, only 18 per cent felt all their major relational needs were fulfilled "very much" by their marriage partner (see Fig. 2-3).

Since marriage is a reciprocal affair, compatibility has dual advantages. If my partner's needs are compatible with mine, not only will she be able to satisfy more of my needs, but also I will be able to satisfy more of hers at less cost to myself in terms of effort. If our marriage is to succeed, both of us must be able to meet the other's needs. The more compatible our needs are, the more rewarding our relationship will be with the same effort (or the less effort will be needed to achieve the



Adapted from Strauss 1945: 166.

Source: 120 engaged or recently married young men and women in Chicago (white, college educated).

**Figure 2-3. Proportion of Man's and Woman's Personal Needs Highly Satisfied by Mate**

same rewards). The beauty of compatible needs is that the very process of gratifying the partner's needs simultaneously satisfies one's own needs. Marriage sometimes calls for more selfless sacrifices, but insofar as needs are compatibly matched, the services given are inherently rewarding.

#### ROLE COMPATIBILITY

Chapter 9 deals with the role conflicts that often arise after marriage. Here we are concerned with minimizing those role conflicts by finding a marriage partner whose role conceptions and expectations mesh reasonably well with our own.

Whereas needs are deeply psychogenic in origin and closely related to underlying hunger, sex, and anxiety drives, roles are culturally defined. In a book on marriage we are primarily concerned with marital roles—with the behaviors expected of husbands and of wives. We should always remember, however, that many needs may be satisfied through a variety of role systems, not only through marriage.

A role is a collection of rights and duties expected of an incumbent of a particular position in a system of relationships. Every man has his own role conceptions; that is, the patterned ways he conceives of himself as acting in the role of husband. At the same time he also has certain role expectations for his wife—how he expects her to behave because she is a married woman.

Compatibility requires the husband's conceptions about how he should behave to coincide with his wife's expectations of how he will behave, and vice versa. In an incompatible marriage the husband expects

his wife to behave in ways she doesn't feel she should, or he feels he has a right to behave in ways she doesn't think he should.

*Sex Roles in Marriage.* In every society there is some consensus about what makes a good husband and a good wife. In feudal societies a good husband is strong and protective, a good wife dependent and nurturant. (These terms sound like the ones used for needs—and they are. The difference is that a man may need to be submissive while society calls for him to play a dominant role—so needs and roles may or may not mesh.) In contemporary American society the differences between the preferred characteristics of a husband and preferences in a wife reflect the popular definitions of marital roles.

**Table 2-1—Relative Importance of Distinctive Features of Wife's vs. Husband's Role**

Characteristic	Wife's Role (male respondents)	Husband's Role (female respondents)
Good cook and housekeeper	2.09	.84
Good looks	1.41	.85
Ambition and industriousness	2.08	2.74
Education and intelligence	1.81	2.40
Good financial prospect	.63	1.60
Favorable social status	.94	1.45

Adapted from McGinnis, 1958. Source: Representative sample of University of Wisconsin students in 1956. High numbers mean greater emphasis. All differences between means for wife's role vs. husband's are statistically significant.

Table 2-1 illustrates the typical role conceptions held by contemporary young people. In addition to special responsibility for house-keeping activities the wife's role includes an appearance attractive enough to satisfy masculine sexual needs. The husband's role emphasizes his responsibility to support his family financially and give it a respectable position in the community. This he achieves partly through his inherited social status but mostly through skill and effort; that is, by putting his education to good use through industrious work.

These differences in marital roles follow the traditional pattern of the division of labor between the sexes. In recent years, however, the relative salience of these characteristics has decreased. McGinnis found that between 1956 and 1959 every one of the six items in Table 2-1 decreased significantly in importance. During the same interval the emphasis given to companionship characteristics increased. Greater stress was given to similarity in religion and education, love, dependable character, and the husband's desire for home and children.

This trend away from traditional roles toward personal relations forms the background for the task of mate-selection in the area of role conceptions. That task cannot be understood, however, as long as we only discuss general tendencies, for if the whole American population

changed simultaneously, role definitions might change without creating incompatibilities.

The problem lies in the variety of role conceptions that exist simultaneously in the same community. Some people emphasize traditional role conceptions and others prefer modern ones. Moreover, traditional and modern conceptions don't come in neat packages, clearly labeled. Rather, there are all sorts of shadings from very traditional to very modern. Nor is this a single ideological dimension along which people can be placed in line. Individuals may have all sorts of mutually inconsistent ideas in different areas. A man may be thoroughly emancipated in his conceptions about sexual behavior and completely conservative about wives working—or vice versa.

Although role conceptions may differ in many ways, differences are clearest along the authority dimension. Here the historical trend has been away from patriarchal ideas toward equalitarian ones.

*Patriarchal Ideas.* The word "patriarchal" means literally that the father should have the authority in the family. Though to modern ears the word has an alarming ring, the traditional family pattern was (and is) not necessarily unpleasant. When both husband and wife believe in patriarchy, it can operate smoothly and satisfyingly.

In a completely patriarchal marriage all authority resides ultimately in the husband. He may delegate some responsibilities to his wife. Indeed, having to make every little decision would be too time-consuming. But the wife's authority is held on his sufferance. He has unquestioned veto power over anything she may decide and the right to take back this delegated responsibility any time he wishes. A patriarchal husband may, if he chooses, consult his wife in the process of making decisions. But when the chips are down, his voice counts.

The Old Testament Hebrew family was distinctly patriarchal. Nor did the New Testament challenge this system of authority. Paul's words to the Ephesians are often quoted by those who prefer this type of role:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body.

Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

Eph. 5:22-25

It should be noted that the wife's obligation to obey her husband is matched by his obligation to love her in return. Although patriarchal husbands sometimes abuse their authority, rights and duties are supposed to be reciprocal.

*Equalitarian Ideas.* At the opposite extreme from patriarchal cen-

tralized authority is equalitarianism. Theoretically this involves no exercise of authority at all. Husband and wife are equally important individuals, neither having the right to dictate to the other. The widespread deletion from the wedding ceremony of the wife's promise to obey reflects the equalitarian point of view.

The rise of this philosophy can be traced to the social influences that have improved the status of women. The Industrial Revolution created the chance for women to work outside the home. Philosophical concepts such as democracy and individualism also contributed to the emancipation of women from an inferior position in society. Along with emancipation outside the home has come increasing equality with the husband in the home.

Women's rights within and outside the home are closely linked. One earmark of equalitarian marriages is that the wife is not necessarily confined to the home but may share the bread-winning responsibility. Indeed, except during those years when she is raising children she is often expected to "be useful" outside the home.

*Mixed Ideas.* The patriarchalism and equalitarianism we have described represent "ideal types"; that is, they are logical extremes that seldom exist in pure form in real life. Frontier conditions gave to pioneer American women an importance impossible under pure patriarchy. And few contemporary families pursue pure equalitarianism. In actual practice most marriages fall somewhere between the two poles.

The following case combines both patriarchal and equalitarian elements in typical fashion:

Mac is quite modern about letting me work when I want to and express my ideas in conversations. He respects my ideas and lets me handle certain aspects of things that other women don't. For example, I handle my own finances. And he isn't always checking up on me. On the other hand, I have a sense of security about him. I know he will take care of me—he'll come and get me if the car gets stuck. And he doesn't hold it against me when I get in a jam. In some ways, he's old-fashioned. He expects obedience to him as the head of the house. He thinks the wife's job is to wait on the husband hand and foot.

The fact that all shades of opinion exist means that instead of classifying marriages into neat pigeonholes labeled "patriarchal" and "equalitarian," it is necessary to think in terms of relative differences.

*Parental Models.* Where do differences in role conceptions come from? Normally they are learned in the process of growing up. Role conceptions are one aspect of the cultural heritage transmitted to the child in the socialization process.

Mostly this is an automatic process. At the time the child doesn't realize he is learning a role, nor his parents that they are teaching him. Inevitably though, this educational process goes on in the family.

Children grow up in the midst of a family role structure. They get used to a language of affection and certain techniques of problem-solving. They have endless opportunities to watch their fathers and mothers play the roles of husband and wife. Unconsciously they learn their parents' manners and mannerisms.

Almost always, children take their parents as models. At three their favorite game is playing "Daddy and Mommy." By the time they are ready for full-fledged marriage roles, they have absorbed the know-how of their parents and have learned the repertoire of behavior that was played before their eyes.

If parents are unhappy or the child dislikes the way they treat him, he may reject their example and choose a different role for himself. Such a rebel's ideas about roles may be more explicit because they have been chosen out of conflicting possibilities:

My dad never had any time to do things with mother. Even on weekends he was always thinking up new schemes for his business. Mother used to gripe about how dad never took her out and hardly had time to talk to her. I decided that when I grew up I was going to treat my wife nicer than dad did.

If men could marry their own sisters, role conceptions would conflict less often. Since they cannot, this is an additional area where marital compatibility is problematic and careful selection desirable. Role behavior is more adaptable than basic needs. Nevertheless, patriarchal husbands married to equalitarian wives have a great deal of adapting to do, sometimes more than they are capable of (see Chapter 9). The basic principle in this area is the plumb line one: the more alike the role ideologies of husband and wife, the greater the compatibility.

#### COMPATIBILITY OF VALUES

A value is a hierarchically ordered preference that affects choices of alternative possibilities, especially in allocating scarce resources. In deciding how I wish to spend my money or my time, I am governed by my values. If my marriage partner's values are similar to mine, we can easily decide how to spend our leisure time or our money. But if she values mink stoles and sport cars while I value rare books and stereo records, we will have a hard time stretching our budget to fit—unless our resources are extraordinary. On the other hand, with modest tastes and reasonably adequate funds perhaps each of us can have some of our favorite items even if we don't like the same things.

The same principle holds as far as leisure time is concerned. No two people ever have identical interests, though the more they have in common, the more companionship they will find in marriage. Where their interests diverge, they can go their separate ways provided the values involved are not incompatible.



*Incompatible Values.* To be incompatible, values must conflict where differences are not allowable. A church, for example, that thinks of itself as the only true church creates value conflicts for members who enter mixed marriages (see Chapter 3). By contrast, religious differences between groups that mutually respect each other cause less difficulty.

Philosophies of life may also be antithetical:

I am an optimist, a romanticist, and an idealist. I'm always willing to give people the benefit of the doubt. Thus I would be completely incompatible with a cynic or someone who is embittered and disillusioned with life. That's why I broke up with Frank. In the beginning I accepted his extreme cynicism with a grain of salt. I felt it was probably a result of some disillusioning experiences and that through example I could change his views. However, I came to realize that this wouldn't work because his cynicism touched on areas where I could exert no appreciable influence (for example, his business dealings). At first his attitude angered me (how could he be so jaded?). But gradually I began to feel sorry for him, in that I was in love with life and he wasn't. Pity, I came to realize, is no basis for love or marriage.

Marital strain may arise not only from irreconcilable beliefs but also from unilateral preferences for pair-structured activities. Thus mixed marriages involve not only different beliefs but also different institutional memberships. My wife and I might have identical beliefs, but if she went to the First Church and I to the Second of the same denomination, we would both be frustrated. Church is supposed to be a family affair, and it hurts to have the partner absent for whatever reason.

If one partner wants to go camping, it's difficult for him to go off alone—especially difficult if she's the one who's interested rather than he. If she likes to play bridge and he doesn't, she can play with "the girls" but won't be able to enjoy mixed doubles until she becomes a widow. Even more difficult is the plight of the husband who wants to entertain at home but whose wife abhors the idea. Worst of all—but exceedingly common—is the wife who likes to dance, married to a man with no sense of rhythm. True he can try to learn, but it would be naive to pretend that effort alone can produce compatibility in all areas. Fortunate the couple whose primary interests and values coincide.

*Divergent Interests.* Sometimes people marry who have little in common but whose interests don't conflict but simply diverge. Such persons are often emotionally self-sufficient. Instead of depending on their marriage partners they are independent. In this classification fall some of the world's great bachelors—men like Thoreau who find satisfaction in solitude with their thoughts and their work.

Such marriages don't mean much. When partners depend on each other for nothing, they gain nothing. Calling them "incompatible" would be using too strong a term. They certainly don't get on each other's

nerves. Better perhaps to say these are pseudo-marriages, lacking the strengths that bind equalitarian or complementary pairs together.

Pseudo-marriages occur occasionally in the upper middle and upper classes:

David and I have been married for ten years. Neither of us thought much about getting married but we hit it off so well at the firm's cocktail parties for visiting V.I.P.'s that we thought we'd give it a try. Since I'm the buyer for the South American shop, I travel a lot and we don't see each other very often. He's out of town a good deal too, checking up on the branch operations. When we do happen to be in town at the same time we go to a play or a night club and have a ball together.

For such couples to be married or single doesn't matter much. Such marriages may be dissolved as casually as they are contracted. More compatibility than this is needed to make marriage meaningful.

## Testing for Compatibility

It is all very well to discuss in general terms the kinds of people who fit together, but this is very abstract. How can a given couple know whether they are compatible short of consulting a marriage counselor? Can they find out for themselves how compatible they will be after marriage?

Under one circumstance the answer is easily ascertained—where the partners grow up together from childhood:

Shirley's and my parents lived within three blocks of each other and our mothers wheeled their baby carriages together. (There is just one month's difference in our ages.) Both families attended the same church, so that the two of us came up through Sunday school, catechism, and Epworth League together. We also went to the same schools. Our families and friends took our courtship very much for granted and I guess maybe we did, too.

Childhood friends usually know each other so well that no special testing is needed. When comparative strangers begin dating, however, complications arise that may create illusions of compatibility where little or none really exists.

### LOVE IS BLIND

Finding the right person is complicated by the human penchant for wishful thinking. If a date appreciably resembles one's ideal partner, imagination fills in the missing details. Perhaps this is the "girl of my dreams." The less I know her, the easier it is to believe she really is "the one."

Idealizing the partner is not to be confused with idealism, that is,

with having high ideals or standards. Idealization means deluding oneself into believing the partner has certain desired characteristics. It is the opposite of seeing a person as he really is—with his faults and limitations as well as his assets.

In general the more insecure the person, the greater his need for distorting partners into idealized form. Insecure people may long for security so much that they “find” it in every date. While this illusion normally shatters with better acquaintance, it sometimes persists for a remarkably long time. One girl talked herself into believing her fiancé was about to set the wedding date whereas in fact he was on the verge of breaking the engagement:

I know I'm constantly engaging in wishful thinking. I keep thinking things are going to be rosy again. Maybe the reason is because I was so much happier last year when we first fell in love than I am now. It felt real good to have someone who loved me and whom I loved.

Her need to be loved was so strong that she continued to believe her fiancé was her ideal long after her family and friends knew better.

How can one guard against delusive idealization? Is there any way the rose-colored glasses can be taken off before marriage? Can the lover come anywhere near seeing his beloved as objectively as a neutral person?

To answer these questions is the task of compatibility testing. Most couples spontaneously engage in the activities that compatibility testing involves. Presumably, the wider the range of these activities, the more thorough the testing.

The trend in American dating has been precisely in the direction of longer acquaintance and more diversified activities before engagement (Koller, 1951). Better testing has been made necessary by the increased mobility of the American population. Mate-selection less often involves childhood sweethearts than it used to. For couples in doubt about—or prematurely convinced about—their compatibility the following program may be useful.

#### THE ELEMENTS OF COMPATIBILITY TESTING

The more varied a couple's dating activities, the more thorough their discussions, and the more intimate their acquaintance with each others' families and friends, the better prepared they will be to foresee what marriage to one another would be like.

✓ *Varied Dating Activities.* Variety can be found in participant as well as spectator activities. Some couples rely exclusively on movies, concerts, and football games with entertainment provided by the management. Any two people should be able to enjoy themselves under

these circumstances since they don't have to depend on their own resources. The advent of television makes possible such stimulation after marriage too. But it takes more than television to hold a marriage together. Only by doing things that require no admission ticket can people discover how much they really enjoy each other.

A second variation involves the setting for dates. Traditionally dating is catalyzed by starlight, perfume, and maybe a little alcohol. Does the relationship fall flat when these props are removed? Or does companionship survive in jeans, chill winds, or dripping sweat?

Group activities may yield different perspectives from pair-dating. Young lovers prefer their own company: "two's company, three's a crowd." Yet after marriage their social life will include entertaining friends and participating in organizations. Double-dating and partying with friends anticipates later socializing.

Reluctance to engage in group activities for fear of being embarrassed by the partner is a bad omen.

Karla and I don't like to go to parties. Maybe it's because of her deafness. She tends to lean toward the person she's listening to and grimaces with the strain of hearing. I know it's uncomfortable for her to have to mingle with a lot of people so I feel tense too. We just prefer to date by ourselves.

Maybe "we just prefer" to date alone. But maybe this is an escape from facing a significant handicap.

Dating is also an opportunity to try out each other's hobbies—the unshared ones. Couples often confine their dating activities to shared interests. Yet after marriage most people continue to pursue their separate interests as well as the joint ones.

Dan is a bird watcher. When he first told me I thought it was sort of silly. And when Spring came I began to resent the time he put in on it that he could have spent with me. Finally one day he persuaded me to go along with him. I was surprised how much fun it was! He started telling me about how the birds migrate and a lot of other stuff I never knew before and I got quite fascinated. Before I know it I'll turn into a bird watcher too.

Acquaintance with the partner's idiosyncratic interests doesn't always produce conversion. But if the effect is much short of toleration, trouble lies ahead. When the result of trying out his interest in boxing matches or hers in church services is disgust that anyone could spend his time so foolishly, continuing friction can be predicted.

Few marriage-minded couples need to be encouraged to include affectionate behavior in their dating. Suffice it to note in passing that loving belongs in the total range of dating activities. (The role of love will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.)

♪ *Discussion.* Simple as it may seem, sheer talk deserves mention as a step toward better understanding. Of course people usually talk on

dates, but what do they talk about? The weather, the news, the music, how you look tonight. Seldom do they let down the barriers and talk about themselves—not about what they are studying, reading, doing, but about what makes them tick: their feelings, aspirations, ideas. When dates begin to share their innermost thoughts with each other as they do with their closest friends, progress toward mutual understanding is achieved:

My fiancée and I went together for a long time before we ever really got to know each other. We went places and did things—had a lot of fun. But one evening when we sat down in front of an open fire and sort of let our hair down, we began to feel as though we were really meant for each other. We talked about the things that meant the most to us, what we wanted to get out of life, and a lot of other things we'd never mentioned before. After that I had a different sort of feeling toward her.

Whereas activities provide opportunities to explore contemporary pleasures and problems, conversations can probe the past and the future as well.

Knowing each other's past makes it easier to understand the other's reactions and to foresee the course of the future. If I know how my partner got to be the way she is, my empathy for her should increase.

Occasionally the question whether to confess past "sins" arises. Individuals who formerly engaged in deviant behavior wonder whether and when they should report it. This is not the kind of information one shares with casual friends. On the other hand, if it is to be shared at all, it deserves to be part of the compatibility testing process rather than delayed until the proverbial "final confession" before marriage.

Whether to confess past delinquencies depends on whether they are likely to affect the partner. If she is likely to hear about it from someone else, better to hear it from me. If she is already suspicious, better to present the facts than allow uncertainty to threaten the relationship. On the other hand, if my brush with the law, with a homosexual, or with a prostitute was a transitory episode not likely to be repeated, there is less reason to tell than if I am likely to repeat my delinquency after marriage.

Since marriage is an exclusive affair, the details of previous emotional involvements are emotionally threatening. Not that the new partner will resign if she hears about her predecessors but her peace of mind is apt to be disturbed. Burgess and Wallin (1953: 268) found that talk about former friends of the opposite sex provoked more "reticence, tension, or emotion" than any other topic of conversation during engagement. Of all the men who had had previous sexual involvements, two-thirds confided some or all of their sexual experience to their fiancées. The latter's reactions to these confessions were more often unfavorable than

favorable (39 per cent *vs.* 12 per cent, the remainder being at least ostensibly neutral [p. 350]). Perhaps conversations about the past should pass lightly over previous involvements unless they have serious implications for the new partner.

Many aspects of marriage can't be tested practically ahead of time but can be discussed. Even before engagement, ideas about preferred family size, about ways of raising children, or about home design can be explored.

In part such discussions involve searching for areas of agreement. It's fun to find that she has the same ideas that I do. Yet if talking is to do more than contribute to an illusion of bliss, there must be a willingness to differ too. Not that dates must turn into debates, but being frank with oneself and one's partner means expressing unique views as well as hugging the common ground.

✓ *Solving Problems.* The ability to arrive at mutually satisfactory decisions is vital to marriage. Dating-couples inevitably have decisions to make—about where to go and what to do. Sometimes those decisions are passed over lightly. The girl is especially apt to allow the partner to make all the decisions on dates although she might be unhappy under similar circumstances in marriage. Before engagement is the time to test out problem-solving ability with married-couple seriousness:

Al always wants to get his own way. I used to let him get away with it but I don't any more. Then I thought maybe I'd lose him if I disagreed with him because I didn't believe he was in love with me. Now that I know he is, I stand up more for my own rights. He's begun to have more respect for my opinion as a result.

In addition to capitalizing on current decision-making opportunities, couples can work toward tentative solutions to the problems they anticipate in marriage. Detailed plans may have to wait until after engagement, but agreement on the basic principles of what church to attend, whether the wife should work, and so forth may significantly affect whether the couple gets engaged in the first place.

✓ *Meeting Friends.* Sometimes an individual can be understood better after a look at his friends. Guilt by association may be poor judicial procedure but good psychology. The company one keeps is seldom accidental. Research confirms the adage that "birds of a feather flock together." Common interests and social status draw and hold a clique together.

If a date looks attractive but her friends seem odd, they reveal a new aspect of her personality.

We got pinned last summer but somehow things haven't been going the way they should. We have very compatible personalities, but I think her friends have a bad influence on her. She's a music major and she hangs

around with a bunch of long hairs whom I think are nuts. She even admits herself that she lives a dual life—one where she's always acting, trying to impress people; the other when she's around me which is more settled, more domestic. The trouble is I can't get her to quit playing around with her arty friends.

This student overestimates his compatibility with his girl. If he were to take a closer look at the situation he might discover that her "nutty" friends meet certain needs in her personality that he doesn't. His revulsion to her friends is a warning that she may be a poor match for him.

✓ *Visiting Each Other's Homes.* Getting acquainted with the partner's family is like taking a look at his friends. People usually resemble their parents. Her mother may give a preview of what a "sweet young thing" will look like twenty-five years and twenty-five pounds later. Her mother's behavior also previews the kind of mother the partner is likely to become, indeed the kind of person she is likely to be in middle age.

But is it fair to judge a person by his family? Isn't there some justice in the remark that "I chose my friends but I couldn't choose my family"? Is it appropriate to hold a person's family against him or give him credit for what they are like?

It's true that an exceptional young adult may reject his family. He may disagree on political and social issues, adopt new values, and carve out his own place in the world. Yet the very fact of rebelling instead of growing up with parental support and encouragement makes a difference:

I don't think I really understood John until I met his father. His dad rules his family with a heavy hand. When he opens his mouth, everyone is supposed to jump. John's mother has put up with it all these years, but I never would. And John didn't either. He used to argue with his father about the race problem and tried to puncture his stereotypes. But it didn't do any good. Now I can appreciate better why John is so touchy about some things and why he's so enthusiastic about "the group process."

When a person reacts against his parents he tends to be extra sensitive. Understanding the family background permits making allowances for bizarre reactions to seemingly innocuous situations. By visiting the family it is possible to anticipate such overreactions.

Most people do not clash with their parents. When feelings are positive parents provide more direct indications about the partner's personality. His own attractive qualities are usually visible in the parents. Hence getting acquainted with them reinforces the good impression already made by the partner.

More important, however, than just getting a look at the partner's parents is the chance to see how he gets along with them. This adds depth to compatibility testing since it reflects the parents' influence during his formative years. A student may have learned to control his childish

reactions since getting away from home, but they tend to reappear on visits home. Sometimes the picture isn't very pretty:

I've never seen Nancy so down in the dumps as the week we spent at her home during spring vacation. Everything her folks said seemed to rub her the wrong way. When her mother asked her to do something, Nancy would do it, but begrudgingly and with the least possible effort. I'd never seen her so irritable before either.

Why can a visit home bring out the worst in a person? Because the process of growing up is seldom smooth. Nostalgic as people are for "the carefree days of childhood," it is often a time of tension, anxiety, and conflict. Going home may reactivate old feelings of resentment, jealousy, and rebelliousness.

According to an old saying, when you see how a man treats his mother, you know how he will treat his wife. Like most folk wisdom this contains both truth and falsehood. Of course the hot temper, lethargy, or sullenness used as weapons against parents are firmly embedded in his personality. But most behavior is "situation-specific." That is, situations have to be similar to each other to produce the same reaction. Structurally, mother and wife are in very different positions. The mother has controlling, authoritative, disciplinary responsibility for her children, whereas the wife is a far less threatening, more-or-less equal partner. Hence the wife can expect the same treatment her husband's mother received only when she acts enough like his mother to trigger off the old reaction pattern.

My mother has always dominated me. She's very precise and always wants things her way. She's always checking up on the way I spend my money and whether I'm eating the right things. I usually do what she tells me to, but only when I get good and ready. . . . In some ways Robin dominates me too, but I don't react to her the same way. I think the difference is that my mother's demands are unreasonable, whereas I usually agree with Robin's suggestions.

This illustrates how close courtship and marriage can come to childhood situations without touching off old reactions. Yet occasionally a transference of old reactions to new situations does occur. One young bride who resented the way her family used to show her off when company came found that even as an adult she felt like "crawling in a hole" when guests arrived. Somehow she always managed to be busy in the kitchen, leaving her husband to greet them at the door.

If behavior is specific to situations, child-parent behavior patterns need not be transferred wholesale into marriage. A look at early family relations, however, shows what repertoire of behavior is potentially available. If the look is too frightening, the love affair may end. At the other extreme what is learned may be highly inviting—this would be a good family to marry into. Midway, there may be a sobering recognition that



the partner is very human but could be lived with comfortably if treated decently.

Visiting prospective in-laws also provides a preview of future in-law relationships. Moreover, the home setting enables the couple to participate in domestic activities. They can get the feel of doing dishes together, taking care of the baby sister, and raking the lawn. If prosaic chores are fun together, marriage becomes more attractive. A visit home also discloses the proverbial way she looks on the "morning-after-the-night-before." A day or two—better yet a week—visiting each family is, therefore, a multiple means of compatibility testing.

*Taking Time.* With all the time-consuming activities that have been proposed, it is hardly necessary to suggest taking time for its own sake. Nevertheless, time serves a useful purpose. If by some magic it were possible to complete the other aspects of compatibility testing instantaneously, time would become important in its own right.

The passage of time tests the wearing qualities of a relationship. As the months go by does it wear well, or does it begin to get on the nerves?

I need a man who is dominant, and at first Carl seemed just right for me. But as time progressed I began to notice aspects of our relationship that didn't bode well for the future. He had such a domineering personality that at times I felt my own individuality was being stifled. In a discussion of some controversial matter he would assert his views, but never really give mine a fair trial. Often the only retort he could think of was to say that my ideas were naive—what could I say except that his were cynical? After a while we began to reach so many stalemates that rather than go through the frustration all over again, we started to avoid certain topics—religion, child-raising, fidelity. Because of his domineering attitude, much of our problem-solving was unsuccessful too. He would listen to my ideas, but then go right ahead and do what he originally intended. I finally realized that the kind of dominance I wanted was not that extreme. I'm glad now I didn't rush into a quick engagement the way he wanted me to.

Some couples lose interest as the relationship becomes "old stuff." Half the excitement may have been due to sheer novelty, while the fact the two weren't sure of each other whetted desires for conquest.

Marriage is designed to last a long time. When the wedding vows

**Table 2-2—Outcome of Engagement, by Length of Acquaintance**

Outcome of Engagement	LENGTH OF ACQUAINTANCE		
	Under 18 Months	18–35 Months	36 Months or More
Broken	18%	12%	9%
Unbroken	82%	88%	91%
Total	100%	100%	100%
No. of couples	356	290	354

Adapted from Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 286. Source: 1,000 college-educated engaged couples in Chicago, 1937–1939.

promise "till death us do part," it is fitting that plenty of time should have been spent in pretesting the relationship.

How much time is "plenty"? In actual practice the average New Haven couple dates for a year and a half before getting engaged (Hollingshead, 1952). Is eighteen months enough?

Table 2-2 shows that the longer the acquaintance, the higher the proportion of engagements that last into marriage. Conversely, the shorter the dating span, the more likely an engagement is to be broken. Since the major decrease in the percentage broken comes after eighteen months, that seems to be a useful minimum for the average couple.

How much time is needed for compatibility testing depends on several factors. The older and more mature the couple, the sounder will be their judgments. The more partners they have dated, the better equipped they are to judge. And the more intensive and varied their dating with each other, the greater the value of the passing months. Conversely, young and inexperienced couples who can seldom see each other need extra months to be sure.

Is separation a good way of testing a relationship? Well-to-do fathers proverbially send their daughters off to Europe before allowing them to get married. They insist on this mostly, however, when they don't like the boy she wants to marry. Though claiming the trip is a good test of love, they really hope it will be a good antidote.

Short separations are not likely to dissolve well-established relationships, so compatible couples need have little to fear. For immature couples clinging together or incompatible couples blinded by their emotional involvement, intervals apart may provide detachment, an opportunity for reflection, and better perspective. When forced by parents, separations often boomerang in rebellious resolves to preserve doubtful relationships. Voluntarily undertaken, however, separating may benefit compatibility-testers who are too deeply involved in their relationship to be objective about it.

Long separations, however, destroy *sound* relationships too. Just as friendship wanes when friends move away, love tends to fade when contact is disrupted. During long separations old ties are apt to be replaced by new ones in the new environment. Hence separating does test the durability of a relationship. But the longer the separation the harder the test, and even the best of potential mates may be lost eventually if tested too severely.

#### INCREASING COMPATIBILITY

Compatibility testing reveals whether couples are compatible or incompatible. When incompatibility emerges, couples usually break up. But

sometimes people feel that compatibility could be increased by changes in the partner's personality. Is this possible?

Human personality is not static. No matter how old they are, people keep changing their interests, attitudes, and reactions. Moreover, behavior depends a good deal on how one is treated. With proper handling could the partner behave better?

The possibility of changing anyone is often dismissed with a smear—"reform." "You can't change a leopard's spots." To be sure, personalities seldom change very much, but that doesn't mean no change is possible. Easiest to accomplish is developing latent potentialities. Before going together, one partner may never have been exposed to the other's church, sport, or hobby. Common interests could develop spontaneously once the novice is introduced to them.

More difficult are changes in old ways of doing things, especially changes in temperament and need-feeding habits. Even such attempts don't always fail, however:

I think Esther's pressures have been good for me. I used to put off studying until the last minute, but now I'd rather study first and play afterward so I can enjoy the playing more. Esther's changed too since we started going together. She has a pretty sharp temper and she used to jump on me and not care. But we've talked it over so that now she tries to keep it down to a minimum and she apologizes afterward when she does blow off at me.

Several aspects of this couple's approach contribute to their success. (1) The reform program is not one-sided but based on the premise that both partners have deficiencies. (2) Changes are pursued openly with no attempt to "put something over" on anyone. By frankly talking out their critical reactions to (and positive aspirations for) one another, a feeling of mutual respect is created. (3) As a result of this process of persuasion each partner accepts the other's desires as a goal for himself and feels supported by the other's respect and love. Under these circumstances the critical partner is not putting pressure on a reluctant person but helping in the attainment of shared goals. (4) The changes are pursued early in the dating relationship rather than hoped for in the future. If compatibility improvement is necessary to marital satisfaction, it should be achieved before getting engaged.

Compatibility testing sometimes discloses emotional problems more serious or deep-seated in nature. Under these circumstances help from the dating partner may be ineffective, and psychotherapy the only basis for personality change.

*Before Engagement.* There are two reasons why desired changes should be tried out before deciding whether to get married. The main one is that personal effort and professional therapy may not succeed. It is seldom possible to predict whether or how much a person will change. Marriage is too serious a business to enter on faith that the partner will

"come around" eventually. It should be undertaken only when each partner is able to accept the other as is.

The second value in pursuing change early is that courtship is one of the most plastic stages of life. When there is hope of winning someone's affection, the incentive to change is strong. This may provide the necessary impetus without which therapy is useless and reform impossible:

I had tried for years to give up smoking for the sake of my health and never succeeded. When I fell in love with Vic I was surprised to find how easy it was to stop. He didn't smoke and I believed he would respect me more if I didn't.

There is always the risk that change will be only temporary. After marriage the old patterns may reassert themselves with the waning of romantic ardor. But pessimism is not necessarily realistic. The new personal relationship reinforces courtship-induced changes, reducing the danger of "back-sliding." In any case lovers feel such risks are worth taking.

Only assuming that change will occur after marriage is foolhardy. To marry the proverbial drunkard in order to reform him is likely to result only in martyrdom. Better not to marry at all or to postpone the engagement than to plunge in before compatibility has been established.

## The Final Choice

As dating proceeds through an increasing range of compatibility testing, the time comes when the results must be assessed and acted upon. Three choices lie open—get engaged, break up, postpone the decision a while longer. In case of doubt parental opinions are often helpful. But in the last analysis the decision must be made by the individual himself.

### PARENTAL ROLES IN MATE-SELECTION

In feudal societies parents traditionally choose their children's partners for them. In industrial societies they lose this authority. Nevertheless, most parents are interested in their children's mate-selection and anxious to help them choose wisely.

**Table 2-3—Parental Participation in Mate-Selection of Sons and Daughters**

	<i>Father</i>	<i>Mother</i>
Son's choice of mate	49%	79%
Daughter's choice of mate	69	97

Adapted from Bates, 1942. Source: 136 young married persons. Reciprocal percentages of parents are not active in the mate-selection of the specified child.

Table 2-3 shows the large proportion of parents who attempt to influence their children's mate-selection overtly enough to be remembered by the children themselves. Mothers clearly are more active than fathers (as in most other aspects of child-rearing), and parents are concerned more with daughters' than sons' marriages. In general, mate-selection is a female specialty.

The methods used by most parents include giving advice, making comments about dating partners, and talking over marriage plans in family conferences. The emphasis is on consultation and guidance, not on pressure and directives. Parents express their opinions about dating partners while children in turn consult their parents' advice. In most cases parents' and children's reactions are similar since successful socialization inculcates the parents' standards in the child:

My parents have never forbidden me to go out with anyone, but they always let me know if they don't like my date, either by ridicule or by saying anything about him. If they do like someone I go out with, they tell me so and what they like about him, and I find that I always have a much better time when I am out with someone I know my parents like.

More difficult are situations where parent and child disagree in their judgments. Under these circumstances the child tends to discount his parents' opinion. Parents belong to another generation with different ideas and different experiences. Their acquaintance with the boy friend is superficial. No matter how much they go out of their way to talk to him, their contact is slight compared to the time the couple spend together. Besides, parents seem to stress different values—job prospects and house-keeping ability, the church he belongs to and who her parents are—to the neglect of the tenderness, companionship, and love that matter most to the couple.

Despite such limitations parental opinion may still be worth noting. For one thing parents are less involved in the affair. As outsiders they can look at the couple more objectively, or at least from a different perspective. From the outside in, it may be easier to see aspects of the relationship the participants have overlooked:

Six months before I finally came to my senses and broke our engagement, my family was up in arms about it. My brother told me I was getting a raw deal and my folks were dead set against the marriage because of the way Don was treating me. They thought it was rude and inconsiderate of him to keep breaking dates at the last minute the way he did. But I kept hoping for the best.

This family's objections were danger signals the daughter long ignored. Had she followed their cue and re-examined her dating relationship she might have realized sooner how unhealthy it was.

Parents may have a useful time perspective too. As members of an

older generation, they can see farther ahead than young daters care to look. The latter's attention is focused on the near future—engagement, wedding, and honeymoon. But parents realize the importance of the subsequent processes of establishing a home and raising children. Their long-range view may throw new light on the present relationship. "Sure she's a nice kid, but could she ever settle down to keeping house?"

Parents are also apt to have a keen appreciation of the child's own needs. Having lived with him so many years, they know him well, sometimes better than he knows himself:

Dad said I'd never be happy with Ray because he was selfish. At the time I couldn't understand what he meant. Ray spent money so lavishly on me that he seemed the most generous person I had ever known. In fact I thought some of dad's relatives were the stingy ones because they were so tight with their money. . . . But now that I've been married to Ray a few months I've discovered that the only person he's really interested in is himself. He never gives either his time or his love to anyone else. I guess dad knew better than I that Ray wasn't the one for me.

Parents have three sources for their critical appraisals—a detached position, a longer time perspective, and knowledge of their child's personality. As a result their opposition to a marriage is often a harbinger of doom. Table 2-4 shows that twice as many affairs terminate short of marriage or early in marriage when both parents are opposed as when both approve. Given the greater concern of parents for their daughters, the girl's family's opinions are more crucial than the man's.

**Table 2-4—Duration of Relationship, by Attitude of Girl's Parents**

Duration of Relationship	ATTITUDE OF GIRL'S PARENTS		
	Both Approve	One Disapproves	Both Disapprove
Broken before marriage	13%	16%	32%
Broken after marriage (separation or divorce)	4	7	4
Married three years or more	83	78	64
Total	100%	101%	100%
No. of couples	660	45	91

Adapted from Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 561.

The statistics in Table 2-4 suggest how seriously parental opposition deserves to be taken. Nevertheless, a majority of the parent-opposed marriages did survive at least three years. Apparently there are some cases in which parents are wrong and the couple are right. The problem is to know how to tell the difference.

*Irrelevant Opposition.* Sometimes parents' opinions are irrational, based on their own emotional needs rather than on the child's objective welfare. A widowed or divorced mother or even an unhappily married one may be so emotionally dependent on her son that she cannot let him

go. Even if her marriage is normal, a woman who dreads the loss of her child-rearing role may hang on to her last child. Such a parent may criticize *any* marriage prospect, no matter how suitable.

In other cases the parents' opinions are irrelevant because they are using criteria not shared by the child. A Lutheran mother may wish her prospective daughter-in-law belonged to the same church, but if her son is an agnostic, that preference means little. Similarly, a businessman's objections to his daughter's "impractical" fiancé is not likely to override a shared interest in theatrical careers. Parental advice is especially inappropriate when the child has been upward mobile. Moving to a higher social position involves new tastes and values which are difficult for parents to understand.

A third determinant of relevance is the nature of the family structure. If parent-child ties are close, opposition is more serious. In an aristocratic or wealthy family the older generation carries more weight. Especially if father and son are to be associated in a family business, the parents can more reasonably veto a prospective daughter-in-law. Conversely, if parent-child relationships are remote, opposition matters less.

Though marrying in the face of parental opposition strains parent-child relationships at best, anguish can be minimized by consideration. For example, elopements (which frequently occur in the face of opposing parents) are apt to be regretted by both generations. Most parents want to attend the wedding even if they aren't enthusiastic about the marriage. Parents appreciate being kept informed of the child's thoughts and plans, even when they disagree with them. Sensitive handling of parental opposition may not dissolve it immediately but will pave the way to better in-law relationships after marriage.

Occasionally, match-making instead of match-breaking needs thwarting. Children of immigrant families sometimes face this problem in acute form:

My parents were very anxious to have me marry someone from their part of Italy. They picked a mate for me about five years ago and held an engagement party for me. I felt trapped because I didn't care for this man. Finally I left home a month before the wedding was to take place—otherwise I would have been forced into it.

Other parents are less drastic in the pressure applied, yet urge their children into unsuitable marriages. Here parental judgment goes awry. Since they are not going to have to live with the person, they should not make the decision. The son or daughter whose marriage it will be is the one to make the final choice, with parents serving only as guides for whatever they may be worth.

The role of friends in mate-selection is similar to that of parents. Friends are more apt than parents to share the individual's values. Through double-dating they may also get to know the partner well.

However they seldom express their doubts and criticisms since they lack the authoritative position of parents (Mayer, 1957). As a result, the fact that friends fail to express disapproval doesn't mean they necessarily approve of the partner. Indeed, reticence can usually be interpreted as disapproval. In those rare cases where disapproval is actually expressed (especially to the girl), their doubts are especially predictive of future trouble (Burgess and Wallin: 563).

#### STANDARDS OF COMPATIBILITY

How much compatibility can be expected between two people at best? Engaged couples sometimes claim perfection, but to an outside observer they usually seem to ignore obvious differences. If no two people are ever completely alike, it is equally true that no two are ever completely compatible.

Some couples worry lest they be too compatible. They fear that similarity of interests may lead to boredom. But the changing tasks of family life and the challenges of occupational and community roles are sufficient stimulus to guarantee that no couple need ever stagnate.

The difficult decisions face those who have too little compatibility. How much compatibility is necessary to make marrying advisable? The answer seems to lie in the balance between costs and rewards in the relationship. If two people are so incompatible that they quarrel often, or feel chronically insecure and dissatisfied, marrying would drain their emotional resources. Marriage can never be all reward and no cost, but the effort each partner puts in should pay off in meeting the other's needs.

**Table 2-5—Duration of Relationship, by Confidence of Engaged Woman**

Duration of Relationship	WOMAN'S CONFIDENCE OF SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE		
	Very Confident	Confident	Uncertain
Broken before marriage	13%	20%	31%
Broken after marriage (separation or divorce)	3	4	15
Married three years or more	84	76	54
Total	100%	100%	100%
Number of couples	571	209	48

Adapted from Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 565.

In making this judgment, the opinions of parents and friends are often helpful. In addition the couple's own doubts deserve serious examination. Burgess and Wallin found that engaged men tend to be quite confident (perhaps overconfident) of the success of their forthcoming marriages. Their fiancées, however, are less certain about their relation-



ships. Uncertainty often foretells a broken engagement or divorce (see Table 2-5).

While marginal doubts may be normal, basic uncertainty usually means something is wrong with the relationship or at least with the readiness of the partners to get married. Therefore, it is seldom wise to marry as long as either partner has doubts. Marriage is too serious a business not to be sure.

In case of doubt, more time and testing may clarify the situation one way or the other. If not, a clergyman or other marriage counselor may help the partners assess their marital prospects.

### THE NECESSITY OF COMMITMENT

If mate-selection involved choosing the best from among all available partners, it would be far simpler. Given a comparison between two possible partners, it is possible to decide which is preferable. Unfortunately, the choice must usually be made between a visible bird-in-the-hand and invisible birds in the bushes. If the current prospect meets minimum standards of compatibility, marrying him would be better than marrying no one. Indeed, he may be the best yet to come along. What a pity, however, to marry him today and discover someone better tomorrow!

Whether it makes sense to wait for somebody better depends on how realistic the chances are. On the one hand, do more compatible people really exist, or is this just romantic daydreaming? On the other hand, how eligible am I? If better partners exist, what are their chances of being interested in me?

All this is partly a question of time. For teenage girls the chances of encountering more compatible partners are excellent. Past the age of thirty, the chances of being able to marry *anybody* dwindle to less than fifty-fifty. Somewhere in their late twenties, the time comes when most people must quit waiting for something better and be willing to marry anybody who meets their minimal standards of compatibility—if they want to marry at all. Up to that age, waiting often pays off:

When I was a Senior, I fell in love with a boy who wanted a wife to cook, to entertain, and to make babies—nothing else. I was tempted to marry him, but after a struggle I came to the conclusion that I couldn't surrender my intellectual interests. I gradually became more sure that there would be other loves—that life *could* go on without him!

I met my husband a year later. I had never met anyone so interesting to talk to nor with so bright a mind. I was drawn to someone with so wide a range of interests, someone gentle and considerate, yet who knew who and what he was, and someone with a wonderful sense of perspective. To him I was one person who could be everything—friend and mistress and wife and mother. We both wanted *everything* from one person, and we still think we got it.

Regardless of whether one marries gloriously or settles more conservatively for a satisfactory minimum, marriage always involves commitment. It always means casting the die with this person, even if a more intriguing one turns up later. It also means taking on the task of creating a marital relationship through the application of skill and effort. Regardless of the providential coincidences that may bring couples together, marriages are not produced ready-made in heaven but created through year after year of living together. Choosing a partner is only the beginning of marriage.

# *Mixed and Unmixed Marriages*

The preceding chapter focused on the characteristics of potential marriage partners as individuals. This chapter goes on to consider the social involvements of the two persons.

People are not just individuals. They are members of groups. They belong to churches, are citizens of particular countries, and are members of more-or-less distinguishable ethnic groups and social classes. Whether they marry a member of the same group has numerous repercussions on married living. Most people do marry-in (that is, "homogamously"). The exceptional cases encounter enough extra problems to require extra compatibility testing. Though focused on the issue whether or not to marry heterogamously, this chapter anticipates problems and solutions for those who choose to marry-out.

## Like Marries Like

Chapter 2 showed that "opposites attract" in some aspects of personality. However, in terms of groups, "like marries like." There are exceptions, of course, but they are *exceptions* to the general rule that people normally marry within their own groups.

## REASONS FOR HOMOGAMY

*Propinquity.* In part, homogamy results from propinquity, that is, from geographical proximity. People who live, worship, work or study in the same place get acquainted with one another, date, and get married. It is a newsworthy oddity for anyone to marry a person he has never met, though an occasional pen-pal does.

Propinquity results in homogamy because people from the same groups have the most contact with each other. Many studies record the extent to which American cities are segregated into separate nationality, religious, class, and racial areas. So like tends to meet like within their own neighborhood.

Propinquity is not limited to childhood sweethearts. The higher up one goes in the social scale, the greater the distance between the home addresses of the partners. Nevertheless, propinquity still operates, though the foci may be different (Katz and Hill, 1958). Instead of meeting in the neighborhood, they may meet in church, at work, or at college. In so doing, they are homogamous in religion, occupation, or education respectively. In addition, since American social life is substantially stratified and segregated, the members of the same group tend to share not just one but several group memberships in common. For example, members of the same church tend to be of the same race, class, and ethnic background also.

This means that quite apart from deliberate strategy or special motivation, homogamy results from like *meeting* like. The groups we belong to provide an institutional framework that brings people together regularly enough so that they have an opportunity to get acquainted. Since interaction produces sentiment, marriage choices tend to be made among people who meet repeatedly in the same social contexts. So chance factors alone account for a great deal of the homogamy in American marriages.

**Table 3-1—Religious Homogamy, by Religious Group**

	RELIGIOUS GROUP			
	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	Total
Percentage of U.S. population	66%	26%	3%	95%*
Expected homogamy due to chance	53	16	2	42
Actual homogamy	91	78	93	88

\* Plus 1% other religion, 3% none, 1% no answer.

Adapted from Glick, 1960. Source: Representative sample of 35,000 U.S. households (Bureau of the Census).

However, Table 3-1 shows that marriages are more homogamous than chance alone can explain. More than twice as many marry within their own religious group as would be expected if the total population were randomly paired off together. Part of the difference is due to the

fact that propinquitous contacts are segregated along religious lines, but the remainder is due to the social pressure, personal prejudice, and rational considerations that influence which of the persons we meet we actually marry.

*Social Pressure.* Sometimes social pressure is codified into law, as in states that prohibit marriage between Negroes and whites. In other cases organizational machinery discourages mixed marriages. Preventing them is a major concern of church officials. Occasionally college officials or employers invoke their authority, especially against interracial couples.

More pervasively, social pressure comes from parents and friends, who usually frown on outgroup marriages. Friends may drop casual comments or more drastically exclude mixed couples from their social life. Parents are even more apt to intervene on behalf of their children's "best interests." It is not unheard of for parents to withdraw their children (especially their daughters) from college or send them on the proverbial trip to Europe in hopes of breaking up mixed relationships.

A student going steady with a Venezuelan boy reported:

When I told my mother I was thinking of marrying Rafael she was very upset. She says I'm blind and don't know what I'm doing. Since then mom has avoided any mention of the subject because it makes her feel so badly. But I found out that she wrote a letter to Rafael and asked him not to marry me. All my girl friends except one think it's terrible—and she's going to marry a South American too!

Sometimes pressure backfires by making the individual even more determined to get married. Frequently, however, it accomplishes its purpose of breaking up the relationship.

*Personal Prejudice.* The average person is drawn to those with whom he has most in common. Shared values, common interests, and identical rituals contribute to a sense of congeniality. A common history of persecution creates a special kind of unity for minority groups. Members of the same church or social class feel more at home with one another than with outsiders.

This feeling results not only from sharing a common culture but also from belief in the superiority of that culture. Ethnocentrism is inculcated during the child-rearing process. Hence, most young people have deep-seated preferences for friends and mates from their own group.

*Rational Choice.* Some people intentionally choose homogamous marriage partners because they believe it improves their marriage prospects. Recognizing that mixed marriages present extra problems, they limit their choice to their own kind.

To summarize, there are factors both within and around the individual that produce homogamy. The strength of these forces varies from person to person, but their combined effect is powerful enough to make mixed marriages the exception rather than the rule.

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF HOMOGAMY

Homogamy guarantees compatibility of certain interests and values. In addition it provides a supporting framework of social relationships. Membership in the same organizations and participation in the same social circles buttress the personal relationship between the two partners. If the going gets tough, homogamous partners have a solidifying environment to uphold them. Mixed couples, by contrast, find their internal difficulties magnified by the counterpulls of their separate social involvements.

The social pressures and personal prejudices that cause homogamy in the first place operate to cement homogamous marriages. Approving parents and friends lend the couple their support and encouragement. Churches, clubs, and ethnic organizations provide cohesion-creating opportunities for joint leisure-time activities. The emotional identification of husband and wife with the same groups gives then an in-group feeling of common destiny. Both internally and externally, homogamy means the absence of potential conflicts and the presence of positive ties.

### Mixed Marriages

Despite the pressures for homogamy, mixed marriages do occur. They differ in degree, not simply in kind, from unmixed ones. Marriages may be mixed along a single dimension (such as religion) or along several.

Because of the pressures toward homogamy most mixed marriages are unidimensional. For example, American soldiers marrying Philippine wives after World War II usually chose those with similar education and social status (Hunt and Collier, 1957). Since unidimensional mixtures are most common, they will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter. Where mixtures are multidimensional, adjustment problems are correspondingly multiplied.

The degree of mixture also depends on the degree of identification each partner has with his own group. In some cases the tie is so residual that the marriage is mixed only externally, not internally; that is, the social involvements of the partners may conflict, but not their personal values and interests.

### RESIDUAL MIXTURES

The chief external complication in residual mixtures is the parents whose identifications have been abandoned by the child. The abandonment may take the form either of loss of identification or of transfer of identification to the partner's group.

*Loss of Identification.* Second-generation Americans are the classic case of lost identity. Whereas first generation immigrants cling to the language and customs of the old country, subsequent generations are increasingly identified with general American culture (Campisi, 1948). As a result, the rate of intermarriage with other nationality backgrounds steadily rises. Similarly, large numbers of Jewish young people are only marginally identified with Judaism. Abandoning one's ancestry has advantages for persecuted minorities where membership is inherited but not highly visible (as it is for most Negroes). The more the minority group is persecuted and discriminated against, the stronger the motivation to desert the group.

America is such a mobile society that leakage goes on from all sorts of groups, not just disadvantaged ones:

I was brought up Catholic and my mother is pretty strong now. But since I came to college I've gotten away from the Church. I still go occasionally when I'm home, more out of respect for my mother than anything else. But I don't accept the official beliefs any more. I'm beginning to wonder whether I should list myself Catholic at registration time.

To call this student Catholic would be misleading. When group identification is so attenuated, it loses much of its meaning. Were he to marry a Protestant it could hardly be called a Catholic-Protestant marriage. Only in the most superficial sense would it be mixed internally.

Yet even in such cases there are potential problems. The devout mother is likely to want her son's children baptized and raised in the Church. And even the son may discover he wants his children baptized and confirmed as he was. Nevertheless, his marriage would be considerably less mixed than if he were a "good" Catholic.

*Transfer of Identification.* A second type of residual mixture involves persons who have not simply drifted away from their parents' group but have actively joined another. Religious converts and social climbers are good examples.

McGuire (1950) estimates that one-fourth of all Americans move up from the class in which they were born. Social climbing requires learning the behavior patterns of the new group and unlearning the patterns of the old. A lower-class boy must avoid swearing, "dirty jokes," and sexual promiscuity to enter the middle class. He must learn how to study hard, save money, and dress neatly. Then he may become sufficiently identified with the middle class to be able to marry a school-teacher with only mild "mixing." She would notice occasional slips in grammar and etiquette but otherwise their marriage might have few internal problems. How his parents reacted would depend on whether they felt more keenly bereft or proud of their estranged son. Her parents, however, are likely to doubt whether he is good enough for their daughter, and her in-law relationships are likely to be especially difficult.

Conversion from one loyalty to another may be wholehearted without wiping out the last traces of socialization in the abandoned group. As for in-laws the sharper the clash between the groups involved, the greater the in-law difficulties. From the parents' point of view it may be easier to accept a child's loss of identification than his actual conversion to the "enemy camp."

When lack of identification persists over a number of generations, perhaps "pseudo-mixture" would be a better term than "residual mixture." Intermarried Catholics often come from homes where religion was unimportant. Intermarried Jews are often the children of parents who never attend religious services (Heiss, 1960). Under these circumstances even the residual consequences of intermarriage do not occur.

Residual mixtures are halfway between homogamous marriages and the genuine mixtures with which this chapter is mainly interested. In genuine mixed marriages each partner retains his identification with his separate group, holds differing beliefs and values, and follows a different way of life.

#### MOTIVES FOR MIXING

Since mixed marriages are exceptional, their motivation may be unusual. Sometimes the individual is attracted to the difference for its own sake. In fact he may be marrying a category as much as a person. Such intentional out-marriage takes four forms.

*Rebellion.* The most neurotic motive is rebellion against parents. An individual who dislikes his parents may marry an outsider in order to hurt them or to prove his own independence.

In high school I dated a boy against mother's wishes (not behind her back, however). His brother had gotten a girl into trouble and I guess mother thought it ran in the family or something. He was the son of a fireman in our town, which was another thing mother had against him. She thought Dick and I wouldn't have much in common, and now that I think about it, we didn't. But I was feeling rebellious at the time, and I thought I was pretty fond of him. I met his friends who seemed very different from the boys I had known and sometimes not as nice. Sometimes it was very dull, and when we both got bored we would neck, which I discovered an excellent antidote for boredom. . . . The main attraction was, I suppose, that mother didn't approve of him.

The vindictive satisfaction of defying parents may offset the strains of incompatibility temporarily. In the long run, however, parents will die and the marriage partner must be lived with for his own sake.

In other cases intermarriage results from a sense of estrangement from one's own ethnic group. Among intermarrying and mixed-dating students at the University of Hawaii, for example, childhood feelings of rejection and social isolation were common (Freeman, 1955). Such feel-



ings lead to sympathy for the person whom one's own group despises—and perhaps to intermarriage.

*Social Reform.* Marrying for social reform is a temptation for sensitive members of majority groups. Embarrassed by the discrimination their fellows inflict on minorities, they may be tempted to demonstrate their own liberality by marrying the latter. Articles on race relations sometimes conclude that intermarriage is the only solution to the race problem. For radical young people the opportunity to contribute to this solution through their own marriages may seem too good to pass up.

*Lure of the Exotic.* The notion that "opposites attract" motivates still other mixed marriages. Glamor, mystery, and sex appeal describe the stranger, whereas the boy next door seems dull and commonplace. One coed felt that going half way around the world to marry an Egyptian would be an "adventure" she wouldn't want to miss.

Fascination by the unusual may be felt between Americans as well as across national boundaries. A rabbi fell in love with a divorcee whom a friend described as "a woman unconventional to the point of bohemianism, an artist and dancer who resents convention to her very core." Since she was nominally Jewish, this match was less mixed ethnically than occupationally.

Were these couples to marry because of the lure of the mysterious, the mystery would fade as they got better acquainted. As the Egyptian's fiancée recognized, "even life with him could become humdrum after ten or twenty years." Thus lure of the exotic is likely to be ephemeral.

This is not to say that mixed marriages are likely to be ever quite so humdrum as unmixed ones. Mixed backgrounds may not be a very sound *basis* for marriage, but they do offer interesting *by-products* to those who make the effort to take advantage of them. Although diverse rituals may be troublesome, they provide opportunities for enrichment. In some Jewish-Gentile marriages, the festivals of both heritages are celebrated and pride is taken in the breadth of experience their diverse backgrounds make possible for both parents and children. Similarly, an American bride going abroad to live with a foreign husband faces all sorts of novel experiences. Again, however, these are secondary advantages rather than safe reasons for marrying.

*Personal Gain.* Finally there are the prudential motives of those who enter mixed marriages in the hope of social or economic gain. Whoever conceives of himself as socially inferior may seek to escape from his position by "marrying up." The stenographer who marries her boss, the Jew who marries a Gentile, the war-bride who marries a Yankee soldier expect to profit socially from their marriages.

Since the man confers his social position on his family, women are the ones who are most apt to "marry up." But if the benefits were only

one-sided, aspiring women would find fewer takers. American soldiers with foreign brides often feel that they are more feminine and certainly more appreciative of the husband's income. Perhaps the husband's ego benefits correspondingly with the wife's social position. Similarly, men who are uncomfortable with equalitarianism often marry down in order to have a more patriarchal marriage.

Marriage *because* of the difference undermines one prerequisite for personal relationships, since the partner is treated as means rather than end. Many of these motives are ephemeral at best. The acid test is whether the marriage would occur if the out-group characteristics of the partner magically disappeared. If not, the basis of attraction is categorical rather than personal.

*Basic Similarity.* By contrast, most mixed marriages are undertaken in spite of the group differences. They are motivated simply by love of the individual for his own sake. These marriages would be even more likely to occur if the group differences did not exist. The partners are attracted to one another as persons who meet each other's needs and share many common interests. They are homogamous in most respects and have a sound personal relationship as a background for coping with the special internal and external stresses created by their mixture.

Sometimes such marriages are entered reluctantly as the best solution available to members of minority groups too small to offer more compatible alternatives.

## Problems of Mixed Marriages

The sheer fact that two people come from different backgrounds creates potential problems. Not all of them arise in any one mixed marriage, but possible trouble spots should be explored in contemplating such a marriage. Some problems are characteristic of all mixed marriages, while others apply to specific combinations.

### BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE

Mixed couples bring conflicting cultures to marriage. For instance, domestic rituals differ. A Protestant boy who "hates fish" was engaged to a Catholic girl. He confessed he'd "just have to get used to" meatless Fridays. Fish versus meat is a small matter, but small matters have a way of adding up. On Sunday morning Catholics go to Mass first and eat afterwards, whereas Protestants eat first and then go to church. The whole church year differs for Christians and Jews, with such central festivals as Christmas and Easter as strange to the Jew as Hanukkah and

Yom Kippur to the Christian. Decisions whether to put up a Christmas tree or other symbol can be surprisingly difficult.

Different conceptions of marriage roles may exist in the two cultures. A second-generation Syrian-American reports that when men of his nationality background marry native Americans, trouble ensues because the wife's "aggressiveness and independence" clash with the husband's expectations. By contrast, girls from "back home" are properly submissive. Such role conflicts tend to be more difficult when the wife is a high-status American than when the husband is. For example, a Cuban man married to an American girl writes:

Having been brought up in an authoritarian society, I often manifest elements of this orientation that are usually resented by Laura who has been reared in a middle-class American family. I have complained about her being bossy, but she probably feels that she has as much reason to call me bossy, too.

*Differential Identification.* Quite apart from conflicting values and other cultural elements, a mixed marriage is "a house divided against itself." Husband and wife have their roots in contrasting traditions with the result that a sense of estrangement lies beneath the surface.

A Protestant wife writing in a Catholic magazine about her marriage concluded thus:

I have never had occasion to alter my original opinion that my husband is the finest man I have ever met. . . . But even so there is still that intangible consciousness of effort that is always with us, always standing as a barrier. We must live with this as with a stranger in the house. And no one relaxes when there are strangers in the house.

People from contrasting backgrounds have less they can take for granted—fewer common assumptions, common values, common habits. Hence they must work harder at communicating and meshing with each other.

When trouble arises, this sense of difference is magnified. Husband and wife unconsciously share the prejudice that exists between their groups—prejudice that characterizes minorities as well as majorities. Traditional stereotypes may be seized as epithets when quarreling breaks out.

*Differential Participation.* Insofar as mixed partners continue to participate separately in their own groups, their solidarity is weakened. Finding common friends is difficult since cliques tend to follow group lines—to be homogamous in the same way marriages are. Sometimes other mixed couples are available. For instance, in Chicago American soldiers married to Japanese wives associate almost exclusively with similar couples (Strauss, 1954). In small communities mixed cliques are impossible to find, so separate friends or no friends may be the only choices available.

The continued participation of each partner in his own group de-

prives the couple of what could otherwise be a binding element. At worst it causes open conflict. Where other couples go to church together, interfaith couples go their separate ways. Though during courtship they may attend both churches every Sunday, the responsibilities of parenthood consume so much time and energy that going to just one's own church becomes difficult enough.

#### BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

When children come, which group shall they be reared in, participate in, identify with? This is the most difficult and widespread problem in interfaith marriages. Where one parent belongs to a persecuted group, identification is extra baffling for the child:

There was only one major conflict in our family. Owing to the religious faction (my mother is a Quaker and my father Jewish Reform) neither parent had fully conceded to the other. The problem was not one of conflicting theologies, because these two religions are about as similar as any two, but rather one of frame of reference. This is exemplified by the fact that before marriage my parents decided any boys would be trained in the synagogue and any girls would go to the Friends Meeting. Luckily there are no boys because that would have emphasized the already existing conflict. Although there were no arguments or even discussions about this topic, the conflict was conveyed subliminally to me, making my parental attachments, identifications, and so forth, unusually difficult by creating a sense of conflicting loyalties. This problem has existed for me as far back as I can remember, even in grammar school where I was first exposed to anti-Semitism in the form of ridicule from playmates. My identification and ultimate participation in Jewish or non-Jewish groups is still unresolved and probably will remain so until I marry. This remains a problem because I have long since discovered that in realistic adult situations (as contrasted with university life) participation in and vacillation between both groups is practically impossible from the standpoint of acceptance and the resulting rewards of group identity. I think I prefer to marry a Jewish man mainly because I perceive the great security derived from functioning entirely in what appears to me to be a more clearly defined and more highly integrated group than the non-Jewish groups.

Not all children of mixed marriages feel as insecure as this girl. Nevertheless, the coming of children presents all mixed marriages with new problems.

#### EXTERNAL PROBLEMS

No matter how solid are the couples themselves, mixed marriages encounter external stress. Pressure is greatest when the groups involved are easily identifiable to outsiders (as in interracial marriages) and when the groups concerned have hostile outgroup feelings.

*In-Law Problems.* Almost any mixture produces in-law difficulties.

Characteristically, the difficulty is sensed by the couple as distance and aloofness (Duvall, 1954). A foreign husband described his relationship to his American in-laws thus:

I often thought of my in-laws as being distant and aloof toward me, especially when I remember that they objected to our marriage at first. But as I got to know them better, I gradually changed this impression about them. Nevertheless, I still feel tense and uneasy whenever they visit us or when we visit them.

Problems often arise with in-laws of different backgrounds and they are difficult to resolve (see Table 3-2). Sussman found not only more

**Table 3-2—Incidence of Intergenerational Difficulties in Mixed and Unmixed Marriages**

Incidence of Intergenerational Difficulties	TYPE OF MARRIAGE	
	Mixed	Unmixed
Yes	90%	18%
No	10	82
Total	100%	100%
No. of cases	39	156

Adapted from Sussman, 1953. Source: Interviews with middle-class New Haven parents of married children.

in-law difficulties in mixed marriages but also fewer “patterned intergenerational family activities,” such as financial help, visiting, and joint vacations. So mixed couples have both more trouble and fewer rewards from their parents. Though aloof from the son-in-law or daughter-in-law, older couples put pressure on their own child to keep him in line with the family traditions. Such pressure focuses especially on the up-bringing of the grandchildren. Interfaith marriages occasionally provoke a veritable tug of war between the two sets of parents for the souls of their grandchildren.

At the very least, grandparental pressures are likely to leave the losing parent feeling badly:

I come from a devout Catholic family and my wife from a very strong Protestant one. She raised all the children Protestant. My family still condemns me for it, but Martha put her foot down on this before we were married. I still feel guilty about the whole situation even though I'm not a practicing Catholic and don't believe in much Catholic dogma myself. Needless to say, due to factors other than the distance, Martha and I have never been very close to the relatives on either side.

Aloofness from in-laws is a natural corollary of those mixed marriages that result from family rebellion. Similar in dynamics are intermarriages that result simply from the looseness of childhood family ties. Where

the family of orientation has disintegrated through death or voluntary separation, the usual social pressures for homogamy are diminished and the postmarital sanctions on heterogamy correspondingly diminished (Coller and Hunt, 1957).

*Occupational Problems.* The majority-group partner may experience the same discriminations as the ordinary member of the minority group to which he is attached by marriage. In some cases his fate is worse. In sensitive positions or sensitive communities marrying into a minority group is worse than being born into it. The latter can't be helped, but intermarriage is unforgiveable. Social discrimination by friends and strangers, institutional pressures from one or both groups—these vary greatly from one situation to another.

## Catholic-Protestant Marriages

Since Catholicism and Protestantism are the two main religions in America, the opportunities for intermarriage between them are extensive. However, in 1957 relatively few married couples in the United States were actually of different faiths. Since Protestantism is the larger group, intramarriage is relatively easy and intermarriage correspondingly uncommon. Of every one hundred married Protestants, only five have a non-Protestant spouse. But since there are fewer Catholics than Protestants in America, 5 per cent of all Protestant *individuals* are married to some 12 per cent of all Catholics. Put in terms of the proportion of all *marriages* that are mixed, these mixed marriages constitute 9 per cent of all marriages involving any Protestant and 22 per cent of all marriages involving any Catholic. For the individual, though, the chances are only one in twenty that a Protestant will marry a non-Protestant, and one in eight that an American Catholic will marry a non-Catholic (Glick, 1960).

The chances of marrying outside one's faith depend relatively little on total American proportions. Rather it is the local population that counts. The more the members of one church associate with other faiths, the more apt they are to marry across religious lines. When a religious group is a tiny fraction of the population, intermarriages are often the only type available.

The areas listed in Table 3-3 illustrate the principle that the fewer fellow churchmembers in the community, the higher the probability of intermarriage. This principle has been demonstrated for Anglicans and Lutherans as well as Catholics (Bossard and Letts, 1956). Interfaith marriages occur especially often when the groups involved are homogeneous ethnically (in language and culture) and socially (in occupation, income, and education).

**Table 3-3—Catholic Interfaith Marriage Rate by Proportion  
of Catholics in the Population**

Area	POPULATION COMPOSITION		Percentage of Interfaith Marriages among All Catholic Marriages
	Catholic	Non-Catholic	
Quebec	88%	12%	2%
New Brunswick	51	49	8
Nova Scotia	34	66	17
Saskatchewan	24	76	26
Alberta	20	80	33
British Columbia	14	86	46
Southeastern U.S.A.	2	98	73

Canadian provincial data from Locke, Sabagh, and Thames, 1957. American figures from Thames (1951) are limited to "valid" mixed marriages and would be close to 100% if "invalid" marriages were included, too.

### SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

Differences in religious faith present obstacles to personal relationships, especially when one church considers it has the only true faith. Under such circumstances couples lack not only spiritual unity but also even the mutual respect for each other's convictions that makes possible a live-and-let-live philosophy.

Marriages between "good" Catholics and "good" Protestants tend to experience these tensions. If couples do not feel them spontaneously, devout relatives and friends and clergymen can be expected to create them.

Interfaith marriages are vulnerable to the usual in-law problems but rarely have occupational difficulties. Problems of the children's religious training are particularly difficult because their religious identification may be seen as a matter of eternal concern. Subcultural differences in values between husband and wife are acute in the area of birth control, though they may also occur over politics, civil liberties, parochial schooling, and the like. Insofar as both partners are active in their own churches, they will be separated at times that are normally family-oriented.

### VALID AND INVALID CATHOLIC MIXED MARRIAGES

The Catholic Church does not allow a member to marry a non-Catholic by the usual wedding ceremony based upon the celebration of the Mass, but substitutes a limited ceremony conducted by the priest. In view of the customary emphasis on the bride in wedding ceremonies, this arrangement involves sacrifices for both Catholic and Protestant brides in interfaith marriages. Most other sacrifices in a validly Catholic marriage fall on the Protestant partner. The necessary concessions are codified in a written agreement that must be signed to be able to secure a special dispensation from the Church authorities to contract an interfaith marriage. Preceding the signing of this contract, the non-Catholic

partner is usually required to take instruction in the Catholic faith (but the converse is not allowed the Catholic partner).

*Ante-Nuptial Contract and Promises*

To be signed in duplicate in the presence of the priest by the parties entering a mixed marriage, and by two witnesses.

TO BE SIGNED BY THE NON-CATHOLIC PARTY

I, the undersigned, not a member of the Catholic Church, wishing to contract marriage with the Catholic party whose signature is also hereinafter affixed to this mutual agreement, being of sound mind and perfectly free, and only after understanding fully the import of my action, do hereby enter into this mutual agreement and the promises therein contained are made in contemplation of and in consideration for the consent, marriage and consequent change of status of the hereinafter mentioned Catholic party, and I, therefore, hereby agree:

1. That I will not interfere in the least with the free exercise of the Catholic party's religion;
2. That I will adhere to the doctrine of the sacred indissolubility of the marriage bond, so that I cannot contract a sacred marriage while my consort is still alive, even though a civil divorce may have been obtained;
3. That all the children, both girls and boys, that may be born of this union shall be baptized and educated solely in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church, even in the event of the death of my Catholic consort. In case of dispute, I, furthermore, hereby fully agree that the custody of all the children shall be given to such guardians as to assure the faithful execution of this covenant and promise;
4. That I will lead a married life in conformity with the Law of God and the teaching of the Catholic Church regarding birth control, realizing fully the attitude of the Catholic Church in this regard;
5. That no other marriage ceremony shall take place before or after this ceremony by the Catholic priest. In testimony of which agreement, I do hereby solemnly swear that I will observe the above agreement and faithfully execute the promises therein contained, and do now affix my signature in approval thereof.

Then there follows a space for the signature of the non-Catholic party after which the four promises to be made by the Catholic party are listed, preceded by a preliminary statement similar to that given above. The Catholic promises:

1. That I shall have all my children, both boys and girls, that may be born of this union, baptized and educated solely in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church. I understand that in case of my death or in the event of a dispute, the custody of all the children shall be given to such guardians as to assure the faithful execution of this covenant and promise;
2. That I will practice my Catholic religion faithfully and will strive, especially by example, prayer and the frequentation of the Sacraments, to bring about the conversion of my consort;
3. That I will lead a married life in conformity with the Law of God and



the teaching of the Catholic Church regarding birth control, realizing fully the attitude of the Catholic Church in this regard;

4. That no other marriage ceremony shall take place before or after this ceremony by the Catholic priest.

Invalid mixed marriages are contracted by American Catholics almost as often as valid ones. Frequently they are undertaken by nominal Catholics to whom their church affiliation was already relatively meaningless. In other cases they reflect unwillingness of the non-Catholic partner to sign the Ante-Nuptial Contract or the fact that one party is divorced and therefore unable to contract a valid Catholic marriage.

### CONSEQUENCES OF INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

Anticipating negative consequences, a considerable proportion of interfaith couples break up before getting married. In Burgess and Wallin's sample (1953: 290), 19 per cent of the engaged couples of differing faiths broke their engagements compared to 11 per cent of those of the same faith. Because of this higher rate of failure among mixed couples prior to marriage, those who do marry represent a select group with somewhat better prospects. Despite this selectivity interfaith couples still have more than their share of troubles.

*Failure.* The success or failure of mixed marriages can be judged most easily by separation and divorce rates. Divorce in this country is controlled chiefly by the wife, with the result that mixed marriages with Catholic wives have fewer divorces than mixed marriages with Protestant wives. However, the crucial question is how much marriage to a partner of different faith affects the rate of failure for Catholic and Protestant women. Table 3-4 shows an increase for Catholic women of 50 per cent and for Protestant women of more than 300 per cent over the rates for unmixed marriages.

**Table 3-4—Combined Separation and Divorce Rates of Catholic and Protestant Women in Unmixed and Mixed Marriages**

Separated or Divorced Percentage, by Faith of Wife	NATURE OF MARRIAGE	
	Unmixed	Mixed
Catholic	4.4%	6.7%
Protestant	6.0	20.6

Adapted from Landis, 1949. Source: 4,108 marriages of parents of Michigan State University students.

The fact that the percentage of failure increases more sharply for Protestant wives in mixed marriages suggests that this may be a more difficult combination than where the wife is Catholic. Landis' students provide supplementary information suggesting that wife-Protestant marriages are more handicapped by their religious differences. In general,

American wives are more devout than their husbands and carry major responsibility for the religious education as well as the general upbringing of their children. The wife also is the one who must bear the children. For such reasons Protestant wives are likely to violate the Catholic husband's views on religious education and contraception.

*Religious Consequences.* Many studies show that partners in mixed marriages attend their own churches less often than unmixed couples. However, it is not clear how much of this religious casualness is effect and how much is cause of the mixed marriage. Though the extent is unknown, there is an observable tendency for interfaith couples to discontinue their religious practice as a means of avoiding the issue that divides them (see Table 3-5). In general, one consequence of interfaith marriage is interference with the religious life of the couple.

**Table 3-5—Frequency of Church Attendance by Similarity of Religious Belief of Husband and Wife**

Church Attendance	AGREEMENT BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE ON RELIGIOUS BELIEFS		
	Complete	Moderate	Little or None
Regular	21%	9%	2%
Occasional	56	58	33
None	23	33	65
Total	100%	100%	100%
Na. of families	391	400	43

Adapted from Chesser, 1957: 282. Source: Women patients of English physicians. Tabulation limited to cases in which husband and wife attended church equally often.

Given this combination of initial and subsequent irreligiosity among husbands and wives, it follows that the children of mixed marriages are also likely to be irreligious. A substantial minority of them receive little or no religious education and identify with neither parent's church (Thomas, 1956: 64). The remainder most often adopt the faith of the mother, especially in the case of daughters. (In Landis' study, 75 per cent of the daughters and 65 per cent of the sons followed the mother's faith, pretty much regardless of whether she was Catholic or Protestant.)

To summarize the consequences of interfaith marriages, they include substantial increases in marriage failures and in interference with the religious faith of both parents and children. Chapter 19 will show that they also involve compromises on both sides in contraceptive practice.

## Jewish-Gentile Marriages

Despite that fact that the Jewish community is much smaller than the Catholic, its mixed marriage rate is lower. Residential and social segregation, both voluntary and discriminatory, reduce the opportunities for

involvement between Jews and Gentiles. Centuries of persecution have produced strong in-group preferences, particularly for those who identify with Judaism or Zionism as religious and ethnic faiths. Nevertheless, the increasing assimilation of Jews into the mainstream of American life is likely to increase the extent of intermarriage based on propinquity.

For the United States as a whole, only 7 per cent of all Jewish *marriages* involves a Gentile partner. This means that for any one Jewish *individual*, the chances are less than one in 25 (under 4 per cent) that he will marry a non-Jewish partner (Glick, 1960). However, in states such as Iowa where the Jewish population is very small, the intermarriage rate may run as much as three times the national rate (Chancellor and Monahan, 1955). Intermarriages are more often undertaken by Reform than by Conservative or Orthodox Jews whose culture patterns are more distinctive and whose lives are more segregated (Barron, 1946).

In contrast to the tendency for Christian wives to carry the main responsibility for religious education, Judaism gives the primary religious role to the man. Perhaps this male-centeredness of Jewish faith accounts for two facts: (1) More Jewish men than women marry Gentile spouses—presumably without endangering their religious or ethnic identification. (2) Most of the children of Jewish-Gentile marriages follow in their father's footsteps and consider themselves Jewish (Baber, 1953: 103).

We have already cited the case of a student who was not sure whether to identify herself with the Jewish community. The fact that persecution has so often been the Jewish fate gives the question of group identification strong emotional overtones.

Gentiles marrying Jewish partners encounter special problems of prejudice and discrimination. In some parts of the United States anti-Semitism is virulent and discrimination takes such forms as exclusion from clubs and resorts and the application of quota systems to college admissions. The extent to which the Gentile partner and the couple's children feel the brunt of such practices depends both on where they live and on the extent to which the family is identified as Jewish. The very existence of such variation produces part of the tension.

## International Marriages

An international marriage requires a drastic change of residence for one partner, usually the woman. It is often said that women make most of the adjustments in marriage, but this is especially true when they must adapt to a new culture.

The partner who moves geographically must make a drastic social move as well. All the problems that immigrants face confront the foreign spouse—learning to speak and write a new language, to like new foods

and sports, to master new customs and values. The process of adapting to the new homeland is speeded up, however, by the help of the spouse and his family. Strauss (1954) found that the husband's parents "generally greeted their Japanese daughters-in-law warmly . . . and played an important part in the acculturation of the bride, teaching her about shopping, about kitchen equipment and the like."

Facilities and equipment are mastered more easily than the subtleties of language. For Japanese war-brides language was perhaps the greatest single difficulty. "The difficulty was greatest in times of crisis or emotional excitement and in such situations as the discussion of technical matters or joking" (Schnepf and Yui, 1955). One result of the strain of having to speak a foreign language all the rest of one's life is a longing to mingle socially with fellow compatriots so the native tongue can be enjoyed again.

In Philippine-American marriages the areas of sharpest conflict between husbands and wives involve child-care practices, housekeeping practices, and sexual attitudes and practices (Hunt and Coller, 1957). The first two areas of conflict are moderated by the American husband's tendency to think of them as the wife's domain, even though he disapproves of them. In the sexual area Philippine wives are unusually modest and passive by American middle-class standards (in much the same way as lower-class American wives), leading to disappointed expectations on the husband's part.

Relearning lifelong habits may seem worth the effort when migrating to the United States with its high standard of living. When migration is in the other direction, an American woman may find fewer compensating advantages unless she falls in love with the exotic foreign culture. Occasional international couples disagree about which country to settle in, with the participants not always on the expected sides. The author knows one American veteran who wants to go back to Japan, whereas his Japanese wife wants to stay here.

The extent to which international marriage requires cultural retraining depends upon the particular culture involved. Mates from English-speaking countries have fewer transitions to make than those who must learn a new language. Western Europeans lead a way of life closer to ours than Orientals or Arabs. Then too, members of high-status international marriages have often had a cosmopolitan up-bringing that provides the tools for assimilation. On such factors the prospects for a given international marriage depend.

International marriages apparently occur more often between American men and foreign women than vice versa. Which partner is the American and which country the couple will live in are crucial determinants of the problems involved. International marriages are so rare that it is impossible to find data on their success. It seems probable that their rates

of failure are higher than homogamous marriages, but studies of surviving marriages involving Japanese war-brides in this country show that some couples can cope to their own satisfaction with the difficulties involved.

Interclass Marriages

By interclass marriages we mean couples who differ in education from each other or whose fathers differ significantly in social class position as measured by occupation, income, and/or education. However we will exclude from our discussion the residual mixtures involved where one partner has been upward mobile to the other partner's class level and concentrate on genuine mixed marriages where the two partners' class position is different at the time of marriage.

HUSBAND-HIGH MARRIAGES

Just as international marriages differ in frequency and success according to the sex of the American partner, interclass marriages differ according to the sex of the superior partner.

In most interclass marriages it is the woman who marries up. From her point of view, this makes a "good marriage" since the husband's status in the community is what counts. By marrying "well" she should be able to share his social prestige as well as his standard of living. From the husband's point of view this match may not be better than marrying at his own class level (unless he prefers a dependent wife). But some distinctively feminine qualifications, especially good looks, are not confined to the middle class. He may find a lower status girl attractive without feeling that her lack of social amenities matters much.

Nevertheless, Table 3-6 shows that husband-high marriages are less successful than homogamous ones. This is not to say that an upward-marrying wife regrets her choice, but that her satisfactions are primarily

Table 3-6—Marriage Adjustment, by Comparative Class Status of Husband and Wife

Marriage Adjustment	COMPARATIVE CLASS STATUS		
	Same	Husband Higher	Wife Higher
Good	53%	35%	28%
Fair	26	33	31
Poor	21	32	41
Total	100%	100%	100%
Na. of cases	215	116	65

Adapted from Roth and Peck, 1951. Source: Burgess and Cottrell's 526 married couples in Chicago, 1931-33.

financial and social rather than marital. Likewise, the husband may continue to be glad he married her, yet find she commits enough *faux pas* to impair their sense of companionship.

#### WIFE-HIGH MARRIAGES

The difficulties of husband-high marriages are mild compared to husband-low marriages. The latter are difficult for the wife if the husband's income provides less than her accustomed standard of living. Of course, most couples start with less than their parents have attained, but husband and wife are "in the same boat." What bothers the "poor little rich girl" is that her comedown is so much greater than her husband's. What hurts even more is seeing her children deprived of luxuries she enjoyed in her childhood. The fiancée of a modestly paid high-school teacher expressed her anxiety thus:

Bruce will probably earn less than half what my father pays in income tax. This won't bother me too much because my family has never lived on a showy plane. But I'm afraid that when my children are old enough to demand things, I won't be able to give them all the money they want. I don't want them to have to pinch pennies when they get to college but to be able to splurge and eat out whenever they want to. I don't want them to have to worry about money or even think about it.

The man who marries up has problems too. He is inevitably sensitive about his financial shortcomings. Gifts from the wife's family are resented as reminders of his lower income. He feels a constant strain to get ahead in his job. Such sensitivities do not make for easy husband-wife or in-law relations.

The problems of wife-high marriages are not only financial. The husband's low social position usually pulls the wife down to his level of reputation and participation in the community. Moreover, the male ego is undermined by the wife's disappointment over his occupational "inadequacy."

While the average husband-low marriage suffers from such psychological strains, the most disastrous interclass marriages involve wives who have been upward mobile past their husband's position (Roth and Peck, 1951). Such wives are most concerned with social status and suffer most from the husband's inadequacies. He in turn feels extra degraded by the wife's success.

### Evaluating the Prospects for a Mixed Marriage

The special problems and extra hazardousness of mixed marriages are clear from the preceding pages. Nevertheless, in every type of mixture *some* marriages turn out well. The question for any mixed couple con-

templating marriage is what makes the difference between those that succeed and those that fail. The answer depends on the couple's own ingredients for marriage.

### QUALIFICATIONS FOR SUCCESS

Because entering a mixed marriage is just a special case of choosing a marriage partner, the standard ingredients of compatibility, skill, effort and support apply—but with special emphasis.

*Compatibility.* In mixed marriages a high degree of compatibility in other respects is desirable to offset the strain presented by the mixture itself. Compatibility differs in degree within the mixed area itself. There is less reason to fear a residual mixture than a genuine one. Even genuine mixtures vary in the extent of incompatibility involved. For instance, a "High-Church" Episcopalian or Lutheran would feel more kinship for Catholic liturgy, a Unitarian Christian for Reform Judaism, an expert on Asia for a Chinese wife. In interclass marriages, Roth and Peck prove that the wider the class difference, the more the marriage suffers. This can be extended to all mixed marriages—the greater the difference between the group identifications, the less desirable the match because the potential problems are correspondingly greater.

*Skill.* Given a certain type of problem, the decision to marry or not to marry depends partly on the couple's coping-ability. The more skillful they are in general, the better they should be able to resolve their differences. They can be sure that a mixed marriage will test their problem-solving skill to the utmost.

If rational problem-solving comes hard, if one partner (or both) is easily provoked to rage or moodiness, if they are short on patience and sympathy, then one qualification for successful mixing is missing.

*Effort.* Mixed marriages require substantially more effort than unmixed ones. For couples unwilling to make the extra effort, mixing produces frustration and bitterness. With effort they can keep working away at "making the best of a bad situation."

Willingness to keep trying is related to the motives for mixing. For couples rebelling against parents or lured by the exotic, effort is likely to wane with the passing of parents or of the novelty. Social reform and personal gain may be more persistent goals yet interfere with mutual love. To survive the stress of mixed backgrounds takes an extra measure of love, of willingness to sacrifice, of concern for the welfare and well-being of the other partner.

*Support.* Most parents oppose mixed marriages, but broadminded ones offer a more auspicious environment. The same can be said for liberal friends, or better yet for friends whose marriages are similarly mixed.

## PROCEDURES FOR DECIDING

To determine whether there is enough compatibility, skill, effort and support, mixed couples need all the standard compatibility testing, and then some.

*Discussion.* Discussion takes on extra importance as a means of informing the partner of the hidden world at hand:

Coming from a subsistence economy, I gave first consideration to the question of differences in our level of living. I tried my best to inform Diane as accurately as I could about living conditions in Brazil—discussed them in detail, gave her materials to read, and cautioned her against forming impressions from tourist advertisements. In addition, I suggested that she should talk to other people—Americans as well as Brazilians—who could give her a more detached evaluation of my country. One of these was a missionary who spent about five years in my country and he had a lot to tell Diane.

Second was the question of the trustworthiness of an American wife. This question kept coming to my mind because of the stereotype (probably gained from the movies) that the people at home have about American wives, especially those married to racial minorities, which is not very complimentary. I also informed Diane about this. In my effort to resolve this question, I took into consideration the following items: (a) Diane's family background which was furnished to me by a townmate of hers; (b) the judgment of a friend of mine with whom I arranged a double date so that he could see Diane for himself; (c) my own evaluation compared to the comments of other people whose judgment I respected.

*Solving Problems.* Skill in problem-solving is useful in any marriage. Mixed couples need more than just generalized skill. They need to resolve as many of their *specific* problems as possible prior to making the marital decision. Preliminary "solutions" may not last when the time comes, but they are the best preview available of problem-solving ability in critical areas of difference.

When young people are in love, facing problems is not easy. It seems a shame to "spoil" a beautiful romance by bringing up troublesome questions. It's more fun to dream in the moonlight than to quarrel about how potential children should be raised:

Jack and I are sitting on top of the world this week. We had some rough times during the last few weeks but now that we've finally agreed to be married by the priest but to use contraceptives until he's settled in his job, we're really enjoying life again. We've decided to postpone trying to decide about the faith of our children because we don't want to shatter this wonderful feeling.

Reluctance to face difficult problems is understandable but inauspicious. The time for facing the problems of a mixed marriage is before getting engaged.

The first task is to face problems—to talk about them openly with



each other. The second is to solve them. To agree on such far off things as the religious education of children may seem premature before marriage. Nevertheless, the attempt to arrive at tentative solutions is an indispensable test of problem-solving ability.

Such anticipatory decision-making is successfully practiced by many mixed couples. McLean (1953) found that well-educated Protestant-Catholic couples engage in considerable problem-solving before getting married. A third of his couples discussed their religious differences extensively before marriage and nearly all the rest did to some degree. Besides simply discussing such matters, most couples planned what church each partner would attend and agreed on the religious training of children. However, only a minority agreed in advance about birth control.

*Visiting Each Other's Homes.* Visiting each other's families shows whether the prospective in-laws will accept or reject the "outsider." Although rejection is common in mixed marriages, it is by no means universal. One Jewish-Gentile couple found a warm welcome from both families:

My mother is crazy about her because she's just the age my sister would have been if she had lived. Our mothers got together during Thanksgiving vacation and hit it off real well. Our families seem to have a great deal in common. After we decided to get married, her mother wrote me a grand letter welcoming me into their family.

Not all families react this positively. Their particular attitude after marriage can best be anticipated by visiting them early in courtship.

Just as visiting families foreshadows future in-law relationships, so getting acquainted with each others' friends tells something about their future social adjustment. However, the judgment must be made largely by the couple themselves since negative feedback from friends is rarely expressed to mixed couples (Mayer, 1957).

*Visiting the "Outgroup."* A distinctive step for mixed couples is participating in the activities of the two groups in order to understand each other's backgrounds. Many interfaith couples attend services at both churches. One white girl went to live in Harlem to help make up her mind whether to marry a Negro boy. She found that immersing herself in an impersonal mass of strangers of her boyfriend's race gave her fresh insight into the social complications of an interracial marriage (Karpf, 1951).

If other mixed couples are known, it helps to inquire about their experiences. Caution is needed, however, in interpreting the experience of any particular couple. Some mixed couples are miserable and others are blissful. Someone else's experience does not guarantee what will happen in one's own case. Nevertheless, such conversations reveal potential problem areas and solutions.

*Getting Expert Help.* For couples whose attempts to solve problems end in failure, the future looks ominous. Both partners might visit a marriage counselor for "trouble-shooting" interviews. These may clarify thinking and facilitate sound conclusions. If the decision is affirmative, the counseling may also help resolve ticklish problems about the marriage.

#### MAKING THE FINAL DECISION

The final decision whether to marry out of one's group depends partly on the attractiveness of the particular prospect and partly on the available alternatives. Mixed marriages are more attractive when there is little chance of a homogamous one either because of a scarcity of homogamous partners or because one's own eligibility is low. The total compatibility of a mixed partner is sometimes greater than that of the best homogamous partner met so far or likely to appear in the future. These are the relative balances that must be weighed.

Because of their special problems, mixed marriages require extra testing in advance. If the tests are passed with flying colors, there is little reason to fear heterogamy.

Although mixed couples have a higher casualty rate than unmixed ones (both in broken engagements and broken marriages), most mixed marriages succeed. The risks may be greater, but they aren't necessarily overwhelming. Some mixed marriages aren't much different from unmixed ones. And some mixed couples find in their diversity a breadth of experience which they prize.

In the last analysis each couple must decide for themselves whether to proceed into marriage. If the criteria and procedures suggested in this chapter are followed, the chances are better that the right decision will be made.

### Avoiding Mixed Marriages

*Other things being equal*, mixed marriages are more difficult than unmixed ones. Since this is true, it is useful to take steps negatively to avoid getting involved with mixed partners and positively to locate homogamous partners.

#### AVOIDING MIXED INVOLVEMENTS

In actual practice most American dating is homogamous. For example, at the University of Florida, Ehrmann (1959: 157) found three-fifths of the casual couples and more than nine-tenths of the steady daters were homogamous by social class. The reasons for homogamy in dating are

the same as the ones for homogamy in marriage: propinquity, pressure, and preference.

A conservative approach might avoid all mixed dating. However, those with more confidence in their own maturity, and especially those whose convictions about mixed marriages are strong, often draw the line between casual and serious dating:

I would rather not date a boy excessively who is not of the same religion since I am not a believer in mixed marriages. This does not mean that I will not date a person of different religion, but I would prefer to keep such dating to a minimum as I realize I might fall in love with such a person and this I would rather not do.

#### FINDING HOMOGAMOUS PARTNERS

There is a saying that "It's just as easy to fall in love with the right person as the wrong person," but this depends on the availability of the right kind. Where a nationality or religious group is small, special efforts are required.

There were only two other Armenian families in our town and neither had any daughters old enough for me to be interested in. For a long time my parents opposed my desires to date American girls. They kept talking about the importance of preserving our culture and even suggested that I should go all the way to Boston to date "some nice Armenian girl." But finally they had to give in because I wanted to take part in our high-school activities so badly.

Casual dating in high school doesn't necessarily lead to intermarriage. But once an individual arrives at marriageable age, discovering homogamous partners becomes more important. In an earlier generation, marriage-brokers scoured the small towns of the South and Midwest to help isolated Jewish young men and women get together. Today the responsibility rests more heavily on the isolated young person himself.

Where are homogamous partners likely to be found? Church colleges and denominational student groups offer sustained opportunities for contact. Ethnic summer resorts and summer projects and conferences provide briefer opportunities. Some communities and some companies offer more chances for finding a homogamous partner. Since marriage is such an important aspect of life, a little forethought may provide lifelong dividends.

# Love: Developing a Personal Relationship

Love is the word that best captures the meaning of marriage in America. Before marriage it is the *sine qua non* of courtship. Dating soon leads to love affairs, great and small. Mate-selection depends on the growth of love. So understanding love is crucial for this book.

## The Nature of Love

There are many kinds of love. The kind we are concerned with is the love between a man and a woman. It may be defined as *an intense emotional attachment between two people of the opposite sex* (Goode, 1959).

Intensity is a matter of degree—despite the Western myth about romance. Love is supposedly an all-or-none affair. One minute life is calm. The next minute, love strikes like lightning, leaving its victims panting and breathless, hearts pounding with excitement, exhibiting the cardiac-respiratory symptoms of classical romance (Folsom, 1934: 68–70). Such things do happen—but they represent the maximum intensity of love. The minimum cannot be precisely defined—which is why many couples cannot pinpoint precisely when their friendship developed into love. In general all we can say is that the emotional intensity of love is greater than that of “mere” friendship.

"Intensity" and "emotionality" are perhaps inseparable terms. The emotion of love signifies its dynamic characteristic. Love is a yearning to be together, an urge for oneness, a desire to please the beloved. Love is a great motivating force in the lives of men and women. It lifts people out of their narrow selves and inspires them to sacrifice and service. It makes empty lives full, bringing meaning where there was none before.

Because it is emotional, love is the favorite theme of those connoisseurs of emotion—the poets. For the same reason it is not easily pigeonholed by academicians. Nevertheless, it is at the living heart of the experience of courtship and marriage—the authenticating stamp without which they are hollow, empty forms.

Love is an attachment between two people, not a "free-floating" feeling. It is a cathexis to an object—a personal object. One might call it an attraction, especially since sexual attraction is one of its ingredients. But attraction can be unreciprocated, and one-sided love is but a crush. Attachment is the better word because it symbolizes the solidarity of the relationship that two partners create between themselves. They are attached to each other, involved with each other, related by ties of interdependence. Whether married or not, they are in a functional sense relatives of one another.

## The Elements of Love

Love is a blend of several elements—sexual attraction, companionship, and care.

*Sexual Attraction.* Love is not merely platonic, not a viewing from afar, but a desire for physical proximity. This doesn't mean that the proof of love is willingness to have premarital intercourse. Rather, it means enjoying each other's presence, being quickened by the sight and especially by the touch of the other, being physically impelled toward each other. Indifference and distaste are the antitheses of love.

*Companionship.* This is the social element in love: the enjoyment of doing things together, of togetherness quite apart from sexuality. It is the basic element in friendship and is simply intensified in love. Because of it humdrum tasks are no longer humdrum when they are shared. It also makes married couples interested in each other when they are not in bed. It is one of the redeeming elements that make married love more than mere sexual desire.

*Care.* The other redeeming element is care:

I enjoy being with Bert unless he's in a bad mood, though I've found a good deal of pleasure in helping him snap out of those moods. Even if he gets mad at me, I like the evidence it gives that he cares about me. I'm happy when I'm with him and enjoy doing things with him and trying to make him happy.

Both sex and companionship can be exploited selfishly. But care is by definition altruistic. It involves concern for the partner, interest in his welfare, and effort to meet his needs.

Care differs from Lady-Bountiful-type charity. It is motivated neither by pity nor duty. It is neither impersonal nor diffused—not part of a general program of uplift. Caring in love is intensely personal, is focused on one person. The ministry of care is carried on joyously. He who truly cares never considers himself a martyr or worthy of special praise. Awareness of the partner's needs is enough to bring spontaneous response.

The caring of one who loves is much like the caring of a saint. The difference is that saints love all mankind while lovers concentrate on the partner. In giving, though, saint and lover are the same. They give of their substance—"all that I have belongs to you." More essentially, they give of themselves—their time and energy and attention.

In this sense they not only care *for* but care *about* the beloved. One of the rewarding aspects of being in love is knowing that somebody cares. One reason why more single people commit suicide is their feeling that nobody cares whether they live or die. To care in this sense means to love a person for himself and to be interested not only in his problems and needs but in all that he is and hopes to become.

Being in love is rewarding not only in receiving care but also in giving it. To meet the partner's needs is to be needed oneself. To be useful is to be alive and growing. Love is often compared with water: dammed up and unused it becomes stagnant; only when it flows is it fresh. So my partner not only meets my self-regarding needs but also in depending on me allows me to give myself to her. In the words of Erich Fromm (1956: 23):

Giving is the highest expression of potency. In the very act of giving, I experience my strength, my wealth, my power. This experience of heightened vitality and potency fills me with joy. I experience myself as overflowing, spending, alive, hence as joyous. Giving is more joyous than receiving, not because it is a deprivation, but because in the act of giving lies the expression of my aliveness.

*Love Is a Synthesis.* There are many ingredients of love; sex, companionship, and care are simply the most prominent. Unlike a recipe there are no fixed proportions. Loves differ in the strengths of the ingredients. In some the physical element is prominent; in others it is below the level of consciousness. The other elements vary too. All that matters is that no element should be entirely missing.

In love the various elements are blended together. Sex, when combined with companionship and care, is very different from "nature in the raw." And love differs from friendship most in the addition of the sexual ele-

ment. Love therefore is not composed of unique ingredients so much as it is a unique combination of ordinarily scattered elements into a relationship with a particular person of the opposite sex.

## Conditions for Love

The conditions under which love arises can be stated very simply: *love is the sentiment that men and women feel who have a personal relationship to one another.* Their relationship provides the social framework within which love spontaneously ignites. In turn their feelings of love motivate them to strengthen the scope and intensity of their relationship.

*Interaction.* To say that love occurs within the structure of personal relations emphasizes that it does not occur in a vacuum. A pin-up picture or a hero's image on the movie screen may be enough for a "crush." But a crush is only a daydream, not the real thing. Love depends on coming to grips with one another, not just dreaming about each other. It requires a willingness to become mutually involved and interdependent. There must be intensive exchanging of thought and many joint activities for love to be more than a sham.

*Respect.* Interaction is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for love. The other condition is respect. When husband and wife respect one another as persons, love becomes a creative, releasing force. Without respect a relationship becomes a stifling prison or an invitation to lust.

If respect is missing, love turns into mutual exploitation. The mere satisfaction of reciprocal or complementary needs is no guarantee of love:

We've broken up many times but we just can't stay apart. I'm sure we both would get along better with others, but whenever we break up she always comes running back to me. We've had three really bad fights. She cries and says she hates the way I push her around. I'm terribly involved with her and I just don't have the strength to stay away from her.

Love must be given and received freely—not compulsively. To have such freedom, each partner must respect the individuality and personal dignity of the other. Even after the wedding ceremony there must be no possessiveness, no treating the other as property; there must be continuing concern for the other as an individual.

## The Pseudo-Loves

When any of the conditions for love or the elements of love is missing, what remains is correspondingly distorted. Although the participants

may think they are in love, they are deluded. The resemblance to love is more apparent than real.

There are two types of pseudo-love. One is infatuation, the other idealization.

#### INFATUATION

When an affair is based on sexual attraction to the exclusion of companionship and care, the result is infatuation. The dictionary defines infatuation as "an extravagant or foolish passion." The folly of infatuation stems from the madness of passion. Human beings are so constructed that they can be attracted physically by countless persons. While we are not so promiscuous as animals who mate with any available partner, many a pretty girl or handsome man causes the heart to flutter. But heart-fluttering is no proof of the presence of love. When excitement is merely sexual, passion is a better word:

Usually we make up by a kiss—it's sort of sex. I think Newt's manhandling is sex too. I considered breaking up with him but I can't stay away from him when he lives so close and we have classes together. He's real fierce when he's mushy. He grabs me passionately and says "Would you ever let another man do this to you?" I can't reason with him. I can't keep saying, no, no, no! I'd miss him too much to be able to drop him now.

The fact that two people are passionately interested in each other does not prove that they are merely infatuated. But where sex holds them together against their better judgment, it is pretty sure to be pseudo-love. Care and companionship are missing. Should marriage eventuate, only a lucky coincidence would produce the other essential elements of love. Without them marriage would become repugnant as the sexual impulse is satisfied and ebbs with age.

Infatuations are dangerous but not inevitably disastrous. Just because an affair starts out as an infatuation does not mean it is doomed to disappointment. Initial interest in face and figure does not prohibit the growth of other elements of love. Since infatuation involves cathexis to a limited object, whether it turns into love depends on whether the relationship broadens to embrace the entire personality of the partner—not just the body.

#### IDEALIZATION

If infatuation is cathexis of a limited object, idealization cathects an imaginary one. While the beloved is not entirely invented, she is seen through the proverbial rose-colored glasses. Enthusiasm arises not for what she really is but for what I wish she were and hope she is. Idealization means projecting into the partner one's own ideals of what



she *should* be like. Done unconsciously enough, projection creates the illusion of perfection where perfection does not exist.

Idealization thrives in the absence of interaction. Hence it is most prominent in love at first sight. As interaction increases, increased knowledge of the partner converts the dream image into appreciation for the real partner. Only those who are too immature to accept shortcomings in the partner go on indefinitely living in a dream world. Indeed, one characteristic of love is that both partners drop their defenses and can be themselves, no longer hiding their faults and weaknesses (Maslow, 1953).

As long as compatibility is tested and proved before engagement is sealed, idealization does no harm. The tragic couples are those who discover too late that they have committed themselves blindly to incompatible relationships. At the beginning of a new romance, idealization is natural and enjoyable. Life would be poorer if dreaming were taboo. Wishes may be disappointed, but the anticipation of love is part of the fun of it:

During adolescence I was constantly in love—*passionately* and *eternally* in love. Love was for the boy who wouldn't look at you, or who yawned if he did! My first love deserted me at fifteen for another—a *sexy* girl, I said to rationalize—and I was sure that life was over. But soon another Adonis came along.

Even after commitment, there is room for idealization in life. Husband and wife need not concentrate as much attention on the other's unattractive features as on the attractive ones. Life will be pleasanter if both partners exaggerate each other's virtues in their own minds and minimize their deficiencies. What matters is not stark realism but basic compatibility—the ability to meet each other's needs reciprocally.

Lack of compatibility is most easily masked when idealization occurs simultaneously on both sides. This usually accounts for love at first sight (though occasionally it is caused by the sudden discovery of unusual compatibility). The boost one ego receives from being idealized by another provides an illusion of compatibility without the substance. Though little actual need-gratification occurs, an impression of destined choice results from the interplay of separate enthusiasms (Solomon, 1955). After such an apparently auspicious beginning it is hard to admit failure, especially if one's need for love is great. Unfortunately, the very persons most prone to idealization are least capable of outliving it.

*The Spice of Life.* By themselves infatuation and idealization are respectively a snare and a delusion. But as parts of the total experience of courtship they can serve useful functions. Fascination with a date helps wean the individual away from his parents—a necessary stage in growing up. Even the elusive attraction of idealization helps one break out of the accustomed security of family and friends.

Moreover, the pseudo-loves add spice to life, even though only temporarily. As long as they don't trap people in incompatible marriages, they are harmless enough pastimes, enjoyable in their own right.

Infatuation and idealization add spice not only as substitutes for love but also as elements in love. Infatuation occurs when the sexual element in love is unduly emphasized and unsupported. In due proportion sexual attraction adds strength to love. Similarly, an idealized image of a partner may turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Not only may she actually prove to have the traits he seeks in her, but also she may respond to his hopes by becoming the kind of person he wants her to be.

So sexual attraction and the excitement of idealization are welcome when they occur between individuals who are well matched and growing in love for each other. Indeed, the American ideal of courtship combines precisely physical attraction and idealized intensity with companionship love.

## The Varieties of Love

The difference between the pseudo-loves and the varieties of love is that the former are partial and ephemeral whereas the latter involve enduring differences in emphasis and intensity.

### VARIATIONS IN EMPHASIS

Although love is always a synthesis of the same three elements, the proportions are not standardized. In some loves the sexual element is the strongest; in others, companionship or care. Hence not all marriages are the same. Every marriage partner combines to some extent the roles of parent, sibling, and lover in the ways he treats his spouse. This means that marriage taps and carries forward one's childhood family relationships, and is not an entirely new role. Love experienced from parents, siblings, and friends is not abandoned at marriage but is incorporated into the repertoire of behavior between the partners.

*Parent-Child Type of Love.* The caring element in love corresponds to the way parents assume responsibility for the welfare of their children. The ultimate in tenderness is symbolized by a mother holding her baby in her arms. If care is one of the elements of love, husbands and wives must care for each other as earlier they were cared for by their parents. Not that they are as helpless as infants any more (except in sickness and death), but that no one is ever too old to appreciate kindness, cheering up, or soothing down.

In all marriages there are times when each partner cares for the

other. In some, however, nurturance flows mostly one way. Where one partner's strong need for succorance is complemented by the other's need to nurture, love takes on a parent-child emphasis.

The "parent" may be of either sex. There are "mother-son" loves and "father-daughter" marriages. Because they emphasize care and protection, they tend to neglect the other elements in love. As long as that neglect is not complete, they are normal variations in love.

*Brother-Sister Type of Love.* To those reared in families racked by sibling rivalry it may seem strange to suggest that siblings might love each other. Yet they sometimes do and provide an analogy for loves that emphasize companionship.

In America there has been a historical shift from father-daughter type love to companionship love. This corresponds to the trend from patriarchalism to equalitarianism. As girls become better educated and more emancipated, the feeling tone of love shifts from protectiveness and dependence to mutual sharing. But historical trends seldom embrace the whole population—so companionship love is not the only kind to be found today.

*Lover Type of Love.* In contrast to the previous types some loves are highly sexual. Since the sexual component in childhood relations is muted by the incest taboo, there is little conscious carry-over from earlier family living. Only the tactile stimuli of nursing, cuddling, and kissing persist from family experience. The fierce genital components of passionate love are new.

Nevertheless, family differences in intimacy contribute to variations in this area. Some families are reserved and distant, with little kissing goodby or goodnight. More effusive families create desires for greater physical intimacy.

Mentioning these three emphases does not mean that every love must be one type or another. Perhaps the commonest synthesis blends the elements so evenly that no special emphasis is apparent.

#### VARIATIONS IN INTENSITY

Although love is by definition intense, its strength varies considerably before marriage. After marriage its intensity almost universally wanes (but that is the concern of Chapter 10). The range of premarital variation is apparent among Burgess and Wallin's engaged couples, 24 per cent of whom described themselves as "head over heels" in love, 70 per cent very much in love, and 7 per cent only somewhat or mildly in love (1953: 170). The causes of these differences are best understood by looking at the two extremes.

*Fever-Pitch Intensity.* Much as feverish romance is pooh-poohed by some, it nevertheless happens—not as often in real life as in Holly-

wood nor as often as people wish, but in some cases. What kind of cases?

(1) The greater the objective impact of the love affair on the individuals involved, the greater the emotional intensity. This is partly a question of speed. Sudden and unexpected changes in life arouse more emotion than gradual, long-term transitions. This is why summer romances are so exciting. A stranger comes suddenly into my life—and if we are vacationing with nothing else to do, comes into it intensively.

Impact also reflects the attractiveness of the partner. The more ideal the combination, the greater the excitement of discovery, like the difference between discovering gold and coal.

Finally, impact reflects the individual's needs. Those who are insecure and lonely without someone to love (and be loved by) respond most eagerly. Such people are also most likely to idealize their partner. Then the impact of love goes beyond pleasure at genuine compatibility to joy over imagined compatibility as well.

(2) The more uncertain and insecure the relationship, the greater the excitement. To discover gold and not know whether one can keep it is maddening. The danger of loss sometimes lies in the partner's unsureness. Other times the uncertainty comes from outside the relationship. Summer romances are intensified by the knowledge that Fall is coming with its inevitable separation. Though separation may not test compatibility, it often heightens the emotion involved, at least as long as there is hope of reunion. Parental opposition is another external obstacle which may boomerang by increasing the couple's motivation. In all these cases the fever of love is a temporary "sickness" that the security of marriage is bound to cure.

(3) The more temperamental a person is, the higher his temperature rises in love. Some individuals are more sensitive than others. They take things harder, react more keenly. Their feelings are volatile and easily stirred. For them love is a more searching experience than for matter-of-fact dullards or carefully controlled sophisticates.

In medicine, fever is symptomatic of illness, and at least one social scientist has suggested the same for love:

All societies recognize that there are occasional violent emotional attachments between persons of opposite sex. . . . Their rarity in most societies suggests that they are psychological abnormalities. . . . The hero of the modern American movie is always a romantic lover just as the hero of the old Arab epic is always an epileptic. (Linton, 1936: 175.)

But this is cynicism not science. Fever-pitch love is abnormal statistically but not psychologically. It seldom occurs and even less often lasts very long. Its transiency is fortunate, or else it would exhaust its victims. But victims they are only in the sense of being gripped by a profound experience. The experience itself is enviable not tragic. These

are the fortunate few who achieve the American ideal. They will treasure memories of their adventure in love and tell their grandchildren about it.

Difficulties are not inherent in excitement itself but only in the assumption that excitement is proof of love and without it there can be no love.

*Low-Pitch Intensity.* According to the romantic myth true love can be recognized by its feverishness. Indoctrinated with this social convention, those who don't have cardiac-respiratory reactions fear something is wrong with their relationship:

Other boys have given me more of a rose-colored feeling than Louie. Does this show that I don't have the proper basis for marrying him? Or am I just getting too old at twenty-five for such an adolescent reaction to any man? We're engaged because I think being married to such a fine guy would be a very rewarding experience. But being engaged is not nearly as exciting as I expected it to be.

Failure to experience the expected emotional intensity is disappointing and disquieting. Skepticism about the soundness of such relationships is worth attention, worth extra compatibility testing to be sure the lack of enthusiasm does not result from internal strains in the relationship. A vital distinction must be drawn between doubts about the soundness of the relationship (which we have already seen forecast difficulty) and calm, unruffled certainty.

Certainty, indeed, is one of the causes of calmness. The more secure the relationship, the calmer the couple. Most people realize that love tends to calm down after marriage. Sometimes it cools beforehand, especially in long courtships and long engagements. Contributing to this process are both the length and the gradualness of involvement. The less perceptibly the relationship grows, the less earth-shaking it is, especially for couples who were casual friends long before falling in love. For lifelong acquaintances the years of preadolescent companionship or disinterest make sudden excitement seem out of place in later years.

Some love affairs are historically fated to be calm. Others reflect the dispositions of the individuals involved. People who never get ruffled in crises or triumphs are not likely to get excited in love. Temperament is too pervasive a characteristic to be abandoned just because people are supposed to act differently.

While some people are predisposed to be easygoing all their lives, the average person becomes more philosophical with the passing years. The inner insecurity of adolescence gives early loves an urgency that later ones lack. As young adults grow in self-acceptance and emotional independence, they develop a stable and more dispassionate approach to life. Hence the girl cited above may have been right in thinking that she was getting too old for the excitability of adolescence.

For reasons of maturity, then, or temperament or long acquaintance,

low intensity is sometimes inevitable. Though wistfully regretted, perhaps, lack of excitement in such cases does not mean a lack of love but rather a normal variation in the intensity of love.

## The Course of Love

So far we have emphasized the emotional aspects of love. From here on we will deal with love more as an attachment, that is with the rise and fall of love relationships.

### STARTING POINTS

According to romantic mythology love springs full-blown into being at first sight. No preparation is needed, no previous acquaintance. If two people are destined for each other, only fate should be able to keep them apart, not disinterest. Once they meet, they should "recognize" each other immediately. So love is supposed to begin with the first encounter.

To become interested in another person is far less than falling in love. Yet Table 4-1 shows that even such minimal attraction didn't happen at first sight for the majority of Burgess and Wallin's respondents.

**Table 4-1—Degree of Acquaintance at First Becoming Interested in the Partner, by Sex**

Degree of Acquaintance	Male	Female
On first meeting	46%	34%
After becoming acquainted	34	37
After becoming friends	20	29
Total	100%	100%
No. of cases	226	226

Adapted from Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 160.

Most couples get acquainted first and only gradually become interested in each other. Love seldom begins at first sight. It usually emerges within the context of growing personal relationships.

A social context for personal interest is especially necessary for women. They are less apt to fall for brand-new acquaintances and correspondingly more apt to become serious about friends. One reason for this difference is that it takes time to analyze a man's occupational prospects and other role capabilities. By contrast, a girl's appearance can be appraised at first glance. Perhaps also, the fact that men have more freedom of choice in mate-selection makes them less cautious about in-

voluments that can be terminated if they turn out badly. Descriptively at least, men seem to be more impetuous and girls more conservative in responding to potential marriage partners.

Though seldom at first sight, the starting point for love varies from couple to couple and even between the partners in a single relationship. The typical (median) couple in Table 4-1 became interested after becoming acquainted, but for some the experience begins earlier and for others much later.

Love not only begins at different stages in acquaintance but also may have most inauspicious precursors. Normally, love grows by intensification from mildly positive experiences or at least from neutral contacts. Occasionally, however, the first encounter is quite negative:

June and I first met on a blind date. I wasn't much impressed. She looked sort of gawky to me. However, I was hard up for a date to the house dance the next weekend, so I asked her to go with me. She didn't exactly bowl me over that time either, but we had a good time and I began to appreciate her sense of humor. It got so we were seeing each other fairly regularly after that and we gradually discovered that we were in love.

*Multiple Relationships.* Can a person be in love with more than one partner at a time? Traditionally, no. Love is supposed to be a one-and-only affair, with both partners so fascinated that they "don't even notice" others of the opposite sex. Hence, anyone who claims to be in love with two people simultaneously is *ipso facto* not in love at all. She just thinks she is—it couldn't be real with both.

In most primitive societies multiple relationships are preferred. Polygamy is not only permitted but idealized. However, love in such societies is so unimportant that their experience is hardly relevant.

In America it is not the men but the women who most often get involved with more than one partner before marriage. This results from our system of mate-selection. Since men have most of the initiative, they pursue their favorite date of the moment, abandoning lesser interests along the way. What happens though if two men court the same girl? Short of engagement there is no moral law that she must choose between them. Steady dating is not so universal that early exclusiveness can be assumed. As a result, a girl can be dated repeatedly by both men in her life. Though no two men are exactly alike, they can be equally compatible (in different ways). Personal relationships with both can develop from dating experiences. And within each relationship emotional attachment naturally develops too.

Whether both attachments can be intensive enough to be called love is the crux of the problem. I would say yes, even though I must admit that being involved in two personal relationships at once is so demanding that it limits what can develop in either one.

If emotional attachment to both partners is equally intense, intensity

is no clue to which one she should marry. If she is equally compatible with both partners, she will simply have to choose one and drop the other, recognizing that the other partner might have been just as suitable.

#### THE PACE OF DEVELOPMENT

Just as love seldom erupts at first sight, it seldom develops suddenly at any later point in acquaintance. In most cases acquaintance is a gradual process; relationships develop gradually; and love too grows slowly and steadily. It takes effort and interaction to build a solid personal relationship. Except in cases of idealization love takes time to develop too:

My first date with Sandra was the night before Christmas vacation. We were pushing a taxi out of a snowdrift in front of the Ad building and the man asked us if we wanted a free ride downtown for the work. Naturally we accepted and went down to a show. This was the start of a friendship that has grown into companionship and finally love. We talked together some that Spring and did many things, but it was purely on a friendly basis and actually we didn't mean much to each other. We began to talk more about religion and our philosophy of life. As we talked and prayed together we found we were drawn closer together. It wasn't until this Fall that we found we were sure of our love for each other. It has not been a "falling" in love but "growing" in love.

*The Sexual Element.* Just as love intensifies slowly within a growing relationship, its sexual component develops gradually too. Affairs that begin as infatuations are unusual. The normal sequence is to get acquainted first and become sexually attracted later.

**Table 4-2—Interval between First Interest in Partner and First Strong Physical Attraction, by Sex**

<i>Interval</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Less than one month	28%	26%
One or two months	25	16
Three to five months	14	20
More than five months	33	37
Total	100%	99%
No. of cases	226	226

Adapted from Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 161.

Table 4-2 is a sequel to Table 4-1. From the time when interest in the other partner develops (typically after becoming acquainted), there is a further lapse of several months before physical attraction becomes appreciable. This period is typically two months for men and three for women, compounding the tendency for men to get involved faster than women.



*The Companionship Element.* Since dating consists of joint recreation, the companionship element in love tends to grow fastest. The partner's companionship is usually increasingly prized as more experiences and more of the self are shared. However, doing things together does not automatically produce personal attachment. Sometimes it only reveals incompatibilities.

*The Caring Element.* Perhaps lagging behind the other components of love is the sense of caring. One basis for caring is empathy; that is, understanding the partner's point of view. Empathy presupposes a body of knowledge acquired through continuing interaction. As time goes by, couples improve in their ability to report how satisfied the partner is with various aspects of their relationship. The more they date each other and the more committed they become, the more accurate their understanding of the partner's satisfaction (Vernon and Stewart, 1957). Similarly, empathy for the partner's opinions about marriage roles improves as couples progress from casual dating to going steady and into engagement (Hobart, 1956).

With increasing empathy comes growing opportunity to respond to the partner's needs and to assume more responsibility for them. By the time a sense of responsibility develops, love has been established.

The pace of love is usually slow and uneven. Relationships reach plateaus and then break through again to greater intimacy. Love as well as marriage has its moments for better and for worse.

#### SPONTANEITY AND EFFORT IN LOVE

Love cannot be commanded. As southern whites often say, they may be forced to sit with Negroes but they cannot be forced to like them. Loving must be voluntary. But does this mean one cannot resolve to love? Must it be completely spontaneous?

To be sure, spontaneous love is the most delightful kind. When love is an effortless response to the discovery of compatibility it is pure joy. The more rapidly love develops and the higher pitched its intensity, the more the resources of the partners are mobilized in the cause of intimacy.

But not all loves begin so enthusiastically or maintain their momentum indefinitely. To the naive romanticist those that don't seem questionably valid. To the judicious observer, however, these other loves suggest the value of conscious effort in supplementing the natural momentum of love.

The following case shows how deliberate initiative can move a relationship to a deeper level of intimacy:

I dated Dave on and off for a year. We had good times square dancing, going to concerts, talking politics and religion. I was sure he was the man for me. Though he liked me, it didn't look like love since he never told me how

he felt about me. Soon school would be over and we would go our separate ways. Dared I be the one to speak first? I became a "scheming woman," planning when and how it might be done. The right moment came and I found courage to protest that despite all the fun we'd had he really didn't know or care about "me." He agreed—and by morning the stars were in his eyes too. If I had waited for him to start things moving I probably would be waiting still!

In this case the partner who was already in love enlisted the love of the other through her efforts.

Once love is mutual, it achieves a certain level of adequacy without effort. Beyond that its potentialities remain untapped unless effort is expended. Hardly a love in the world can claim for very long that it achieves its maximum capabilities merely by "doing what come naturally." Of course, there is no law that says couples must transcend the level of spontaneity. But those who don't are not likely to experience love to its fullest.

Erich Fromm writes persuasively of "the art of loving," an art that like others is capable of being perfected with practice. The requirements, he believes, are self-discipline, concentration on the task at hand, patience with the slowness of achieving mastery, and supreme concern to achieve that mastery (1956: 108-10). Perhaps these can be translated to a pair frame of reference by saying that love between two people is enhanced the more they focus their energies over a long period of time on meeting each other's needs.

Since the sentiment of love springs from positive interaction, the more rewarding activities a couple undertake together and the more thoughtfully each ministers to the other, the greater their love will grow. The great achievements in life require sacrifice and work, and love is no exception. Casual affairs may be nice, but those who wish to experience the fullest human relationships must be more than dilettantes.

## The Crises of Love

So far we have assumed that love progresses more or less evenly toward marriage. This is the normal course of events for love that eventuates in marriage. But it often ends short of marriage or survives only with difficulty. What kinds of crises afflict such affairs?

### DISAGREEMENTS AND DOUBTS

Disagreements occur in every honest relationship, though some couples are afraid to bring them out into the open and others resolve them so easily that little trace is left in the memory. Disagreements are most common among casual dating couples and decrease with in-

creased intimacy (Kirkpatrick and Hobart, 1954). This reflects a selective process: disagreeing couples tend to break up, leaving the more compatible ones to go steady or get engaged. Nevertheless, even in engagement the typical couple interviewed by Burgess and Wallin reported several areas of disagreement. Particularly troublesome were relationships to families and friends, plus issues of conventionality in dress and behavior (1953: 246).

Sometimes disagreements are so serious that they threaten the entire relationship. More often they are coped with successfully. In any case they test the couple's problem-solving ability.

*Doubts about Continuing the Relationship.* When disagreements fail to be resolved, they raise doubts about compatibility and, in turn, about love itself. Uncertainty is most common in nascent relationships and normally is resolved before engagement. However, engagement is no guarantee that old doubts will not reassert themselves or new ones arise.

**Table 4-3—Frequency of Regretting Engagement, by Sex**

Frequency of Regretting Engagement	Male	Female
Never	80%	78%
Once	10	8
More than once	10	15
Total	100%	101%
No. of cases	978	978

Adapted from Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 181.

Table 4-3 shows that a fifth of the engaged individuals questioned by Burgess and Wallin confessed they had wished at least once they had never gotten engaged. Women particularly often had these regrets, perhaps because marriage is a more fateful and less free choice for them.

The seriousness of such regrets is implied by the fact that 15 per cent of the total group subsequently broke their engagements. Burgess and Wallin do not tell us how many of the doubters were involved, but we can assume a substantial overlap. In any case when doubts about the wisdom of the relationship go as far as regretting the engagement, they deserve serious investigation. Often the engagement *should* be broken if it looks this doubtful.

Short of regretting the engagement, ambivalent feelings are even more common. Nearly half the Burgess-Wallin respondents recalled hesitating about marrying the partner at some point before or after engagement. Only 59 per cent of the men and 52 per cent of the women could report unhesitating progress from dating into marriage (p. 180). Even these figures probably underestimate the amount of doubt. According to psychologists, no human relationship is ever completely free of

ambivalence. Underneath there are always some doubts, fears, and resentments. So occasional doubting in the face of a lifelong commitment is not surprising. The more prolonged and serious the doubts, however, the greater the need for the relationship to be re-examined and perhaps dissolved.

#### DETERRENTS TO DISSOLVING A RELATIONSHIP

Once two people get involved in a personal relationship, breaking up is more easily said than done. Even if it becomes clear that the relationship has no future, the present may have values that are not easily abandoned.

*Lethargy.* For one thing it's difficult to part with a bird in the hand since hard work may be necessary to capture one in the bush:

I hate to think about dropping her just when I was all set and secure. I never did like that game of idle chit-chat that you have to carry on with a new date. It would be awful to have to go through the rigors of that again.

For girls especially, restricted dating initiative creates desires to cling to the existing partner.

*Rapport.* Others may look singularly unattractive in comparison to the empathic responsiveness of the partner dated for a long time:

I still have a strong feeling for Andy in spite of his faults. I've never met anyone who was so warm and understanding as he is. Other people never seem to be able to appreciate my moods and bolster my ego the way he does.

Maybe Andy is pretty special in this respect. More likely other intimate acquaintances would yield as much rapport. Often what seem to be unique virtues of the present partner reflect instead the extent the couple has gone together.

*Physical Intimacy.* Sexual involvement may make breaking up difficult because of reluctance to lose the source of sexual gratification or because of guilt feelings about "loving her and leaving her."

I realize that Laura and I should never get married, but right now I just can't resist her. I'm not proud of being so wishy-washy, but when Saturday night rolls around I make a beeline for her apartment. Then at church on Sunday morning I could kick myself for having so little self-control.

*Emotional Dependence.* Reluctance to break up stems not only from egocentric but also from altruistic motives. When breaking up would hurt the other partner just as much as it would me, distaste multiplies. No one likes to inflict unnecessary pain on others:

We've gone together so long that I know Rog would be awfully hurt if I returned his pin. He's just gotten used to my being around. (In fact the way he takes me for granted is one thing that gripes me about him.) I'm afraid leaving him now would demoralize him completely.

When emotional dependence is one-sided, the mature person is the one who tires of the relationship first. Yet knowing how much his partner gains in emotional support from the relationship, he may hesitate to pull the props out from under her:

How do I explain to Jill that I want to do more dating with others before I say she's the right one (especially since I've been dating her for three years and still am not happy). She's happy no matter what I do, as long as I decide on her in the end. I don't think I will, but she looks so sad when I mention any doubt, it breaks my heart.

When the partner is emotionally unstable, continuing the relationship may seem the only safeguard against a nervous breakdown or even threatened suicide. Though the risks are great under such circumstances, the responsibility for preserving mental health should be transferred from romantic to psychiatric facilities.

*Social Commitments.* Engagement itself is difficult enough to break off—a public acknowledgment of personal failure, the ring to return, and so forth. Worse yet is the situation of couples who don't discover their mistake until the wedding date is set, invitations sent, relatives' travel plans made, or the gifts have begun to arrive. Such a late decision to break up inconveniences more than just the couple. Insofar as family and friends thought it was a good marriage, disengagement is all the more difficult.

Yet no matter how painful breaking up may be before marriage, going through a divorce or living out an incompatible marriage is worse. Many people come to regret that they got married, but few of those who break up in advance ever regret it later. Usually, they recognize how narrowly they escaped from life-long incompatibility:

When I returned from Korea, I needed a romance regardless of the personality. I found a childhood friend who had been sick for six months with mononucleosis, and she too needed a date. So, unfortunately, we kept on dating, and because we wanted to be in love we thought we were. The consequences were an engagement ring and wedding plans. Our parents were very good friends; we attended the same church and were superficially very compatible. But our interests and approaches to situations and goals in life were very different. We weren't really in love even, and as soon as I woke up enough to realize it, it was a month before the wedding. It was an unfortunate experience in some ways, but breaking the engagement was the only answer, and I'm certainly relieved that I was able to do so.

#### AIDS TO DISSOLVING A RELATIONSHIP

Though poignantly felt by those who encounter them, the barriers to terminating unsatisfactory relationships are seldom insuperable. Often they crumble of their own accord. If not, a strategic attack with reinforcements can vanquish them.

*Loss of Interest.* Affairs frequently end through the evaporation of attraction for one partner or between both. When disinterest is mutual, the relationship simply withers and dies, unmourned by either partner. For the students reported in Table 4-4 the demise of nearly half their love affairs was equilateral. Here no "breaking" up was necessary because the couples just drifted apart.

**Table 4-4—Cause of Dissolution of Love Affairs, by Sex**

Cause of Dissolution	Male	Female
Mutual loss of interest	47%	38%
Subject's interest in another person	15	32
Partner's interest in another person	30	15
External pressure (parents, friends)	8	14
Total	100%	99%
No. of respondents	230	414

Adapted from Kirkpatrick and Caplow, 1945: 123. Source: University of Minnesota sociology students reporting on all their previous love affairs.

In cases where falling out of love is one-sided, the initiative in breaking up came twice as often from the girl as from the boy. Girls may have little opportunity for initiating new relationships, but for this very reason they can more often choose between competing attractions. Just as we shall see with sexual intimacy, so in love as a whole, the boy initiates and the girl controls. Her chief power is to say no.

Table 4-4 suggests that for both sexes ordinarily the disillusionment is mutual or else the dissatisfied individual already has a more attractive partner to turn to. Under such circumstances leaving the old partner is not likely to be difficult.

*The Example of Others.* Knowing how often others change partners takes the onus off abandoning one's own. Chapter 1 suggested that repeated serious involvements are a growing feature of the American dating system, which means that experience in dissolving relationships is equally widespread. We have already reported that the typical Michigan undergraduate has gone steady with two partners, and Kirkpatrick and Caplow's Minnesota undergraduates have similarly had at least two "important love affairs." Broken engagements, while less common than discontinued uncommitted loves, are by no means rare. Among Burgess and Wallin's engaged couples, 24 per cent of the men and 36 per cent of the women had already broken at least one previous engagement, and 15 per cent of the current engagements subsequently broke (p. 273). Knowledge that others have terminated relationships too reduces the sense of shame involved.

*Strategic Withdrawal.* When emotional involvement is intense, various maneuvers can make the process of escape less nerve-racking. Those who can't face the partner's disappointment sometimes employ "go-

between" or the U.S. mails to carry the fateful message. Those who don't trust their ability to resist the partner's persuasiveness may time the break just before a prolonged separation, as at the beginning of a vacation trip. When one's own dependence is the problem, filling the vacuum with new dating helps bridge the gap between loves (though it also creates the danger of rebounding into love).

*Moral Support.* It is not necessary to go through crises alone. Telling friends of the decision to break up can be a way of burning one's bridges to prevent retreat:

The first few times I refused more dates with Shep were the hardest. After that it wasn't so bad. My friends were skeptical at first because I had sworn off him so many times before. I finally convinced them that I really meant business this time and needed their help. They were grand too. They fixed me up with blind dates to help me get my mind off him. My roommate would grab the phone and tell Shep I wasn't in. That really made the break a lot easier.

A sympathetic counselor can provide similar encouragement to the fainthearted. A firm commitment to a counselor bolsters emotional resources for going through the ordeal. Most people, however, need no such maneuvering to end their old loves. They are capable of making up their own minds and sharing their thoughts directly with the partner.

#### RECUPERATING FROM "BEREAVEMENT"

Knowing how often dissolution reflects mutual disinterest or growing interest in an alternative partner, we should not expect many individuals to feel shattered at the end of a love affair. Only those who have been dropped when they still wished to continue the relationship are likely to be hurt.

Table 4-5 shows that negative reactions do occur, but they are far from universal. Almost as many are pleased the affair has ended. Most

**Table 4-5—Emotional State after Dissolution of a Love Affair, by Sex**

<i>Emotional State</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Crushed, hurt	12%	19%
Angry, bitter	9	8
Remorseful	7	7
Mixed regret and relief	22	21
Indifferent	19	16
Satisfied	12	8
Relieved	15	17
Happy	4	4
Total	100%	100%
No. of respondents	230	414

Adapted from Kirkpatrick and Caplaw, 1945: 124.

typical of all, however, are those who feel neutral, either because they are indifferent or because they are ambivalent.

Further confirmation of the untraumatic nature of most break-ups is found in the Minnesota report that half the students had no readjustment period while less than a fourth required more than a few weeks to recuperate. Rarely is breaking up as awful in retrospect as it sometimes appears in prospect.

## Love and Marriage

In choosing a marriage partner, love is a useful criterion. The pseudo-loves are no help and may lure the individual away from more marriageable persons. Infatuation or idealization may grow into love but don't necessarily.

Regardless of how deviantly a love affair begins, whenever it develops into genuine love, it points the way toward marriage. Without love few Americans are interested in marriage. Love provides the dynamic, motivating force that makes homogamous, compatible couples want to get married and leads them through the bittersweet experiences of life together.



# *Giving Physical*

## *Expression to Love*

The title of this chapter is the statement of an ideal. This book is primarily concerned with people in love—actually or potentially. Love is a relationship between people—a face-to-face relationship. Because faces are attached to bodies, love tends to become a body-to-body relationship. As it does, the human body becomes one of the instruments in the expression of love.

Yet love is not the only motive that draws men and women together sexually—in marriage and out. So the whole panorama of motives must be examined if we are to understand not only what sexual love is but also what it is not.

### The Impulse to Intimacy

“Intimacy” is used in this chapter as a variable; that is, as any degree of physical contact ranging from the simplest kiss to the heaviest petting and complete sexual relations. This usage suggests not that the degree of intimacy does not matter, but that in many respects the causes and consequences of various levels in intimacy differ in degree rather than kind. Hence, for the sake of brevity, we can often discuss the sexual component in courtship in general, subdividing our discussion only where necessary.

## THE MOMENTUM OF LOVE

As two people grow in their love for one another, that love embraces more and more of their lives. Although their relationship may have been platonic at first, they tend to be increasingly attracted physically. It is pleasant not only to do things together but also to be together—close together. A goodnight kiss tangibly expresses their feelings of love. Other expressions take the form of words or such symbols as flowers, candy, and valentines. But physical contact is one of the most meaningful ways of expressing deep feeling. A kiss and embrace speak eloquently of how much two people love each other. Indeed this physical dimension is a distinguishing feature of love.

The last chapter noted that most love affairs begin platonically and develop sexual feelings as time goes on. In general the longer two people go together, the stronger their love becomes; and the stronger their love, the greater the impulse to intimacy. This is why we classify sex as one of the components of love. The growth of sexual attraction between lovers is therefore natural and practically inevitable.

*Anticipating Marriage.* As marriage approaches a new factor emerges, particularly with respect to intercourse. Commitment to be married in the near future brings complete intimacy onto the horizon of life. As plans for the wedding, honeymoon, and married living are worked out, as more and more aspects of life are shared in anticipation, the temptation grows to “jump the gun.” Especially when engagements extend on and on, couples come to feel like old married couples in general, so why not in this particular?

First and foremost among my reasons for having intercourse with Jane was that I loved her very much. In the heat of my love—and I have no doubt that some of it was passion—I felt that to have this experience with love in my heart would be all right. I had begun to doubt whether the wedding ceremony made the sex act more sacred or satisfying. I concluded that in the light of our love for one another we were already married anyway.

*Testing for Compatibility.* With all the emphasis we have placed on choosing a suitable marriage partner, is premarital intercourse a useful means of discovering whether two people are sexually right for each other? If sexual compatibility were primarily a question of physique, such evidence might be useful. However this is not the case. Despite adolescent speculations to the contrary, human beings of almost any shape and size are able to mate successfully. For this reason few couples need feel any necessity to “try each other out for size.”

The crucial factors in sexual compatibility are psychological not anatomical or physiological. Testing the psychological aspects of sex through premarital intercourse may be unreliable. Marital intercourse differs sufficiently from premarital in the security of the relationship and

in the social and religious sanctioning of the activity that the couple's emotional reactions may be affected tremendously. Individuals who would feel guilt-stricken and awkward in intercourse before marriage function quite differently after marriage.

Compatibility testing is a doubtful argument for sexual relations before marriage. What does matter is whether the couple share common attitudes toward sex. If their philosophy about its importance or unimportance and their emotional responsiveness to one another are similar, they should be able to develop a satisfactory sexual relationship in marriage.

Nevertheless, in actual practice, anxiety about sexual compatibility occasionally prompts sexual experimentation. So it must be listed as one of the impulses to intimacy.

*Strengthening the Relationship.* We shall discuss later the question whether intimacy actually strengthens relationships. Here the point is that girls sometimes permit or engage in intimacies primarily for the purpose of intensifying the partner's interest. Recognizing that sex means a great deal to her partner, she may give herself to him because she loves him:

I gave in to Bill because I knew he wanted me to and that it would keep him coming back. The first few times we petted, and many times after that, I myself did not experience any satisfaction at all, something Bill knew and that I did not care about as long as it strengthened our relationship.

Sometimes the motivation is more exploitive, especially if the girl feels that sex is all she has to offer to trap a particularly desirable male. Kirkendall (1961) finds that lower class girls are often quite aggressive with middle-class partners, hoping through intercourse or even intentional pregnancy to be able to make a "good" marriage.

Even if marriage is out of the question, sexual experiences may offer a temporary substitute for love which the girl finds emotionally gratifying:

I had the misfortune of maturing ahead of the rest of my class. When one boy repeatedly tried to touch my breasts, there quickened in me doubts, fears, and a sense of ugliness about sex. Later in junior high school, I tried to be friends with two very popular class leaders. Both were dating skinny, flat-chested girls and wanted only an opportunity to pet. As long as they kept saying "I love you" I gave in out of a hunger for affection and pride in catching these popular boys. It never went beyond light petting, but at the time I hated myself for it. I learned then that sex can be cold and meaningless if it isn't an expression of real love.

Here the impulse to intimacy is no more than pseudo-love. Yet, for girls who have been emotionally starved in childhood, pseudo-love seems better than no love at all. In extreme cases this motive is compelling enough

to figure prominently in the behavior of sexual delinquents in general (Cohen, 1955) and unmarried mothers in particular (Vincent, 1961).

Even though girls are more inclined to use sex as a means to love, men are not altogether immune to this motivation. They may take the willingness of a girl to surrender as proof of their desirability, proof that they are loved. And since everyone likes to be loved, this incentive is very appealing, especially to those of either sex who have never been loved.

### SEXUAL DESIRE

In the preceding section the impulse to intimacy was not primarily sexual. Now we come to the sexual motives as such—sexual desire and sex drive. By sexual desire we mean the desire for sexual experience with another person; by sex drive, the inner physiological force that, particularly in the male, seeks expression in what Kinsey labels sexual “outlets.”

Sexual desire results from arousal by the sex appeal of the partner. It is the excitement created by a girl's pretty face and attractive figure, by a man's handsome features and physical vigor. Though the primary components are physical, sexual attractiveness is also affected by speech, manner, and all sorts of subtle nuances of behavior.

As we have already mentioned, sexual desire is not usually the starting point of serious courtships, but tends to follow the development of friendship and affection. Those attractions that are initially altogether sexual may subsequently develop the remaining components of love. But not always. Sometimes sex remains the entire basis of a relationship or especially of a single episode between people.

This is one reason why summer romances so often have a sexual emphasis. It takes time for friendship to grow and for the whole range of shared interests in a fully personal relationship to develop. Sexual desire, on the other hand, especially in the male, can be aroused instantaneously. Indeed, the greatest intensity of sexual desire often occurs under circumstances where the man does not have to worry about long-term complications or what his friends will think. Give a man anonymity from those who know him and the knowledge that even the girl will not make continuing claims upon him, and sexual desire can be most explosive:

Worrying about how far to go when you hardly know someone seems ridiculous. However, I have found that most fellows will spend as little as possible and try to squeeze payment from you. One fellow, when I asked him why he had given me such a hard time, told me he felt that since he would never see me again, it wouldn't matter what he tried. “Who knows, maybe you would have been one of those real easy ones.”

If he thought he might want to see her again, he would have been less aggressive for fear of ruining his chances. Or if he thought she would be seeing him again, he might hesitate to acquire an aggressive reputation among her friends. Instead, when the network of primary relationships among friends and between partners is disrupted by geographical mobility, the mechanisms of social control break down and exploitive behavior becomes more ruthless.

Sometimes the intimacy achieved in casual circumstances exceeds what the aggressor had expected. As in the case above the man may not expect the girl to allow very much, but he nevertheless feels impelled to test the limits. His behavior resembles little children testing the limits of control with every new adult who assumes responsibility for them. With every new baby sitter or every substitute teacher children feel compelled to discover how much they can get away with, partly for the thrill of forbidden experience, partly just to find out what sort of person she is.

Sexual desire, then, is partly accentuated by novelty, which accounts for the familiar notion that men are "naturally polygamous." From the merely physical point of view the new partner may have no more to offer than the old one. But sexual desire is heavily influenced by psychological factors, not the least of which is the excitement of a new prospect.

Although girls are not entirely exempt from the attractions of novelty, the feminine mind tends to operate differently. The classic phrase is not that human beings but *men* are polygamous. Men tend to "love 'em and leave 'em." The corresponding feminine fear is to be abandoned (especially, abandoned with a baby). Such psychological processes account for the feminine interest in love and marriage, leaving males alone to experience sexual desire in social vacuums. This does not mean that sexual desire is unknown for girls, but that it usually arises for them within a context of love and interpersonal security. For men sexual desire is a stronger impulse and one that arises under more varying circumstances. In fact so great is the contrast between the sexes in this respect that Ehrmann has coined the epigrammatic summary for his research: males are erotic; females are romantic (1959).

#### SEX DRIVE

We have already defined sex drive as physiological pressure for sexual expression. Here we are abstracting out the purely biological aspects of sexual motivation. Part of the dynamic force of the impulse to intimacy comes from such down-to-earth factors as hormones secreted into the blood stream and semen accumulating in the male gonads. The latter process produces nocturnal emissions of semen periodically if no other occasion for ejaculation occurs. Experimental evidence of the physiological component in sexual behavior includes the discovery that

"the administration of male hormones (androgens) to either humans or animals may increase the general level of sexual response" (Kirkendall, 1961a). The precise balance between the physiological and psychological components of sexual motivation is difficult to determine. Ford and Beach (1951) emphasize that one of the main differences between the sexual behavior of humans and of other mammals is in the lessened control of hormones in humans. We are therefore less at the mercy of our body chemistry than the lower animals. Nevertheless, the biological underpinnings of sexual motivation are important in understanding human behavior.

*Sex Differences in Sex Drive.* One of the myths of modern man, a myth assiduously cultivated by Dr. Kinsey, is that males and females do not differ in sex drive. To be sure, they seem to differ, but the lesser sexuality of women is due to inhibitions drilled into them by a maleficent culture. If only women could be emancipated from the handicaps of more rigorous socialization, they would be just as obsessed with sex as men.

I have labeled this notion a "myth" because it seems to me to be false. It is so difficult to disentangle the physiological and nonphysiological components of human sexual behavior that its falseness is very difficult to prove. Nevertheless, a number of facts suggest that sex drive in men is intrinsically stronger than in women.

For instance, whereas the experimental evidence cited above shows that the administration of hormones increases male sexual responsiveness (drive), there is no corresponding evidence for females. Hormonal influence apparently is stronger in the male.

The fact that males produce seminal fluids whereas females do not is a second differentiating factor. Shuttleworth (1959) concludes that "males behave as if they were under rather constant physiological pressures, strong in some individuals and weak in others, to obtain an orgasm which will release accumulated seminal fluids." Kinsey stresses the physiological analogy between orgasm in the two sexes. Nevertheless, the occurrence of ejaculation in the male only, when compounded by the variable frequency of female orgasm in contrast to the near universality of male climax in intercourse, points to a more potent biological element in the male sex.

A third differentiating factor is the larger size and external location of the male sex organ. Kinsey notes the anatomical and physiological analogies between the male penis and the female clitoris. But similarity in kind should not blind us to the differences in degree between the two. Whereas the penis is a prominent feature of the little boy's awareness of himself, the clitoris is so rudimentary in size and so hidden in location that girls are often unaware of its existence.

In short, males are driven by hormonal chemistry, by seminal pressures, by genital awareness, and by the more predictable and rewarding

nature of their sexual climax far more than females. Such biological differences contribute heavily to the higher salience of sex in the consciousness and value system of the average male.

Since we are dealing in averages, it is well to remember that in particular cases, a man may have a weaker sex drive than his partner. Especially when we add the nonphysiological components to sexual motivation, a girl may be more eager for intimacy than her boyfriend. But not in general.

*Age Differences in Sex Drive.* If sex drive is biologically defined, it is understandably correlated with the general vigor of the human organism. Just as a baseball player is old at thirty, so a sexual athlete's capacity wanes in middle age. Since heterosexual behavior is primarily male initiated, the male's declining sex drive lowers the frequency of marital intercourse (see Chapter 18).

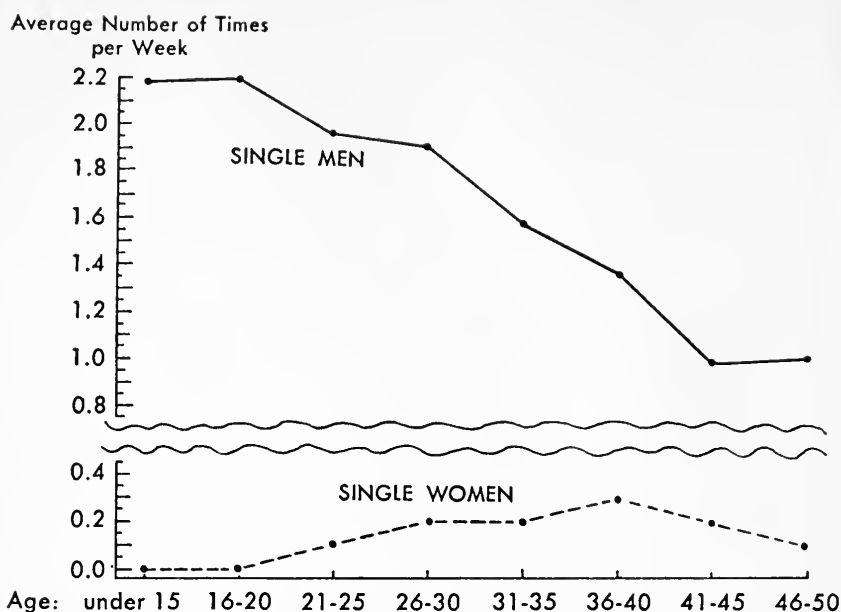
Kirkendall wisely warns that figures on sexual *behavior* cannot be taken as a direct measure of sex *drive* since they are so greatly affected by such factors as novelty and accessibility of partners (1961a). Despite this caution Kinsey's data on differences in sexual behavior by age and sex give us the best indirect index to the nature and rough magnitude of these differences.

Figure 5-1 gives an accurate picture of the frequency of sexual activity among single males. In the case of females the data underestimate the amount of sexual activity, since many women engage in sexual behavior yet fail to reach a climax. Nevertheless, the wide discrepancy between the level of the two curves strongly suggests that men and women differ significantly in strength of sex drive.

As for age differences Kinsey (1949: 226) suggests that male aging "sets in soon after the initiation of growth." If this is true, it means that the sex drive in males is strongest during the premarital years. In the case of females it should not necessarily be concluded that sex drive as such increases in middle age. The rising frequency of orgasm among single women is probably due more to gradually learned sexual responsiveness than to increasing physiological drive. It is, however, fairly safe to infer from Figure 5-1 and from Kinsey's discussion of sex differences in hormonal factors that at the very least sexual aging in females begins at a later age. Probably this is correlated with the fact that women live longer than men.

To summarize in Shuttleworth's own terms, whereas the physiological drive in males is strong, "Females behave differently. They are much more influenced by environmental factors, by social pressures, and by marital status." In short sex drive is a major impulse to intimacy for males but of questionable significance for females.

Under the impetus of this powerful drive, young men seek intimacy both within and without the context of personal relationships. Outside



Median number of orgasms per week among single men and women.  
Based on Kinsey, 1949; 226; and Kinsey, 1953; 549.

**Figure 5-1. Frequency of Orgasm in Single Men and Women, by Age**

that context the sheer “itch” to physical “relief” impels many of them to intimate behavior with women for whom they otherwise have nothing but contempt. Sex drive therefore accounts for much of the sexual exploitation that occurs. Exploitation occurs when the male’s emphasis is exclusively on the personal gratification he can quarry from the girl involved. Yet even when intimacy is motivated by love, its physiological foundation heightens the emotional intensity of the experience, especially for the man.

#### SOCIAL PRESSURES

It is important not to overemphasize the role of physiological factors in sexual behavior. Especially in deviant (impersonal) intimacy, the motivation is sometimes quite unbiological in nature. Indeed the more deviant the behavior, the more likely such social motivations are to emerge. However, the relationship between motivation and the nature of the interpersonal bond is not a simple one. As we compare engagement with casual pickups and prostitution, the characteristic motive changes from love to sex drive to social pressure.

Especially in the use of prostitutes by teenage boys, “a desire for sheer physical release [is] one of the least important of the several motiva-



tions" (Kirkendall, 1960). Instead "the desire to be a part of a group and to participate in a group experience [is] a major motivation." Often groups of teenagers go to a house of prostitution on a dare, with the main concern of every participant being to prove that he is not "chicken."

With less deviant partners the social pressure is usually less direct. The fact that adolescent male peer groups talk so much about sex creates an atmosphere that stimulates experimentation. As an individual, each boy's curiosity is aroused, while as a member of the group he is motivated to gain prestige by being able to boast of conquests.

So far we have discussed positive pressures for sexual activity, situations in which sexual exploits are the expected norm. For girls the peer group less often compels sexual intimacy. However, the fact that girls are more stringently taught *not* to engage in sexual intimacies creates the hazard that a deviant few will rebel. Where parents are unduly authoritarian, sexual delinquency is a beautiful way of getting back at them (either intentionally or unconsciously). Such girls may find no physical pleasure in their sexual adventures but experience great emotional gratification in doing what they have been forbidden to do. Similarly, in some "beatnik" circles, sexual promiscuity is part of a general pattern of rebellion against the norms of middle-class society in general as well as of parents in particular.

After this long review it should be apparent that the motives for intimacy vary enormously. At the same time, motives are often mixed, so factors come into play in all sorts of combinations.

## The Course of Sexual Involvement

Given the various motives for intimacy, how far do American young people go in actual practice? With what sort of partners? What circumstances determine how far a given couple will go before marriage? A wealth of research makes possible fairly accurate answers to such questions. Our focus will be primarily on college students and college graduates since this book is designed primarily for such readers.

### DEGREE OF INTIMACY

Although the stages in involvement could be broken down further, for the sake of simplicity we shall concentrate on four main types: (1) necking (kissing and hugging); (2) light petting (caressing the girl's clothed breasts); (3) heavy petting (including caressing the naked breasts and all genital contacts short of intercourse); and (4) intercourse itself.

Table 5-1 shows the maximum degree of involvement with any partner ever reached by unmarried students at the University of Florida up

**Table 5-1—Maximum Intimacy for College Men and Women**

<i>Maximum Intimacy</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Never dated	1%	*
Holding hands	2	1%
Necking	9	34
Light petting	8	18
Heavy petting	18	32
Sexual intercourse	62	15
Total	100%	100%
No. of cases	382	200

\* One case.

Adapted from Ehrmann, 1959: 46. Source: University of Florida (Gainesville), 1947-50.

to the time they were interviewed. A drastic difference exists at that age (around twenty) between the experience of men versus women students. Whereas the typical (median) coed had never experienced more than light petting, more than half the men had already engaged in intercourse at least once. The gap between the sexes is widened slightly in this study by veterans of World War II with extra sexual experience. Nevertheless, 57 per cent of the nonveteran men had also had premarital intercourse at the time of the study.

The experiences of college students do not usually cover the entire period of courtship. Women particularly alter their behavior during the last few months before marriage, engaging in intimacies with their fiancé they had never permitted with any other partner.

Unfortunately, figures corresponding precisely to Table 5-1 are not available for the entire period up to marriage. However, the following over-all generalizations can be gleaned from the Kinsey reports. By the time of marriage about two-thirds of college-educated men and two-fifths of college-educated women have engaged in premarital intercourse (1949: 348; 1953: 337). Heavy petting apart from intercourse is comparatively rare, but about three-quarters of college-educated women engage in light petting prior to marriage (1953: 280).

The major dividing line among such women is between those who experience light petting and those who go beyond that point to experience more or less complete sexual intimacy. For roughly 23 per cent the maximum intimacy is necking, another 27 per cent stop with light petting, 10 per cent with heavy petting, and the remaining 40 per cent go all the way. (These figures are interpolated from Kinsey's Table 73 and should be viewed as approximations at best.)

For the details about what sort of persons become most intimate, with what sort of partners, and under what circumstances, information is available chiefly with respect to intercourse only. However, most of the generalizations that can be made about complete intimacy apply correspondingly to lesser degrees of intimacy.

## SOURCES OF SEXUAL INVOLVEMENT

The kinds of individuals who engage in premarital intercourse differ significantly from those who do not. Since chasity is the norm (especially for women), premarital intercourse is a form of deviant behavior in our society. Indeed, for teenagers it is in most states technically a form of juvenile delinquency. Hence, those groups that are most prone to become delinquent in general are most prone to engage in this form of sexual delinquency in particular. The more deviant the partnership (especially with prostitutes), the more conspicuously is this true. Nevertheless, even among engaged couples, those who are most intimate tend to share the same characteristics.

*Irreligiosity.* The religions of America are concerned with conformity to norms of ethical or moral behavior. Indeed, the term "immorality" often is used to mean precisely *sexual* immorality, and especially nonmarital intercourse. We therefore expect intercourse to be more common among individuals who do not expose themselves to the ethical teaching, the group support, and the supernatural sanction for conforming behavior that church attendance involves. Studies by Burgess and Wallin, Ehrmann, Kanin, and Kinsey all support this generalization.

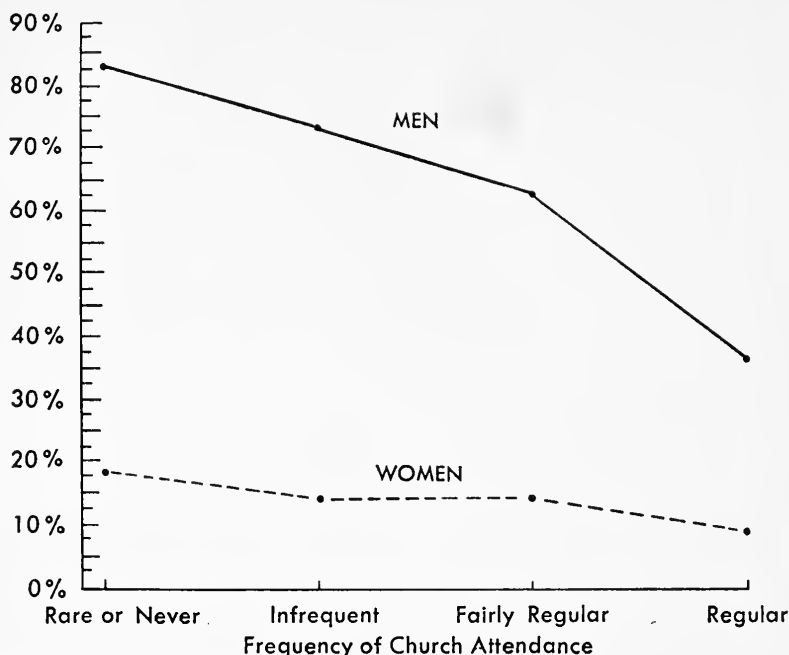
Figure 5-2 shows how premarital intercourse with all sorts of partners increases as church attendance drops. In a study of married students at a midwestern university Kanin (1958: 557) found an even closer correlation between church attendance and lack of intercourse *between* the two partners before marriage. Where both partners attended church regularly, only 28 per cent of the couples had premarital intercourse. By contrast, if only one partner was a regular churchgoer, 48 per cent had intercourse, and if neither went to church regularly, 61 per cent.

Such data suggest that one of the major sources of deviant sexual behavior is irreligiosity.

*Low Social Status.* Despite the existence of "white-collar crime," studies in social stratification show that the lower the individual's social status, the greater the likelihood that he will engage in crime and delinquency. References to the "middle-class norms" of our society reflect the tendency of that class not only to conform to but also to establish the norms of social behavior. Conversely, the lower or "working class" is labeled "low" partly because of its failure to adhere to these norms.

One element in middle-class norms is "the deferred gratification pattern" (Schneider and Lysgaard). Although this primarily involves deferring economic rewards through prolonging the period of education, it also includes postponing sexual gratification. The connection between the two is not accidental, since sexual gratification endangers education through early forced marriages. Premarital chastity, therefore, has practical value for members of the middle class.

Percentage Ever Experiencing  
Premarital Intercourse



Source: Ehrmann, 1959: 93.

Reciprocal percentages have never experienced intercourse.

**Figure 5-2. Premarital Intercourse, by Frequency of Church Attendance, for College Men and Women**

Although a few studies fail to correlate stratification and intimacy, enough confirm the hypothesis to lend it substantial support. For example, when education is used as a measure of status, Kinsey (1948: 550) finds that among middle-aged bachelors, 98 per cent of the grade-school educated and 85 per cent of the high-school educated but only 67 per cent of the college educated have ever had intercourse. Differences in the frequency of premarital intercourse are even more striking. In the sixteen-to twenty-year age bracket grade-school educated men have intercourse seven times as often as college-bound men. Even if the comparison is restricted to those who have intercourse at least once during the five-year interval, the "active" grade-school group's frequency is still six times as high (p. 348). Not only are low-status men more apt to experience intercourse at all but also those who do tend to repeat the experience far more often.

Deferred gratification is especially emphasized by men who are upward mobile. Faced with the need for concentrated effort on occupational success, they are even more conservative sexually than their class

of destination (and differ sharply from the liberal behavior of their class of origin). For example, Lindenfeld (1960) found that 45 per cent of nonmobile college men had had premarital intercourse but only 36 per cent of upward mobile men. Such conservatism is both a result of their preoccupation with studies and earning their way through college and a sign of greater adherence to the norms of their new social class.

By contrast, for low-status women sexual intimacy is often a *means* to vertical mobility. Several studies show that when a girl dates a fellow of *higher* social status, she is extra apt to have sexual relations. For example, in Kanin's sample of married students, 83 per cent of the wives from working class backgrounds and 42 per cent of those from lower-middle class but only 31 per cent of those from the upper-middle class had had premarital intercourse with their upper middle-class husbands (1958).

Since we do not know *when* these lower-class wives first engaged in sexual relations with their husbands, we cannot say for sure how many of them used sex as a means of winning a college-educated husband. But, this study of married couples and Ehrmann's 1955 report on dating couples prove that premarital intimacy is related to the partners' comparative social status. When the male's is higher, he is more aggressive sexually and the female more receptive. Conversely, when low-status males date high-status females, the result is unusually conservative behavior by both parties (see Table 5-2).

**Table 5-2—Maximum Intimacy, by Comparative Class of Companion of College Men**

Maximum Intimacy	COMPARATIVE CLASS OF COMPANION		
	Female Higher	Same	Female Lower
Holding hands	20%	6%	6%
Necking, light petting	47	39	13
Heavy petting	16	26	16
Sexual intercourse	18	30	66
Total	101%	101%	101%
No. of cases	107	531	154

Adapted from Ehrmann, 1959: 147. The total numbers of cases are not mutually exclusive. 338 men dated companions at the same class level only, 39 at the same and higher levels, 86 at the same and lower levels, and 68 at all three levels.

In general low-status men and women tend to go farther and more often into sexual intimacies that their middle-class counterparts reserve for marriage. When a low-status boy aspires to upward mobility, he carefully follows the more conservative patterns of his reference group. However, for lower-class girls, sexual intimacy with high-status boys sometimes becomes a means to marrying them, and thence to upward mobility.

*Inadequate Socialization by Parents.* One reason low-status indi-

viduals are more apt to break the sexual codes of our society is their troubled family backgrounds. When children lack the care and affection of adequately functioning parents, conscience development is impaired. When parents neglect to discipline their children, norms fail to be taught in the first place. When parents use harsh and arbitrary discipline, children tend to reject the norms being instilled. At either extreme—of indifference or authoritarianism—the socialization process breaks down.

Research shows that unsatisfactory family environments lead to premarital intimacy. Intercourse is more common for English women who lose their mother through death, lose a parent through separation or divorce, or whose parents' own marriage is unhappy (Chesser, 1957: 319). Loss of the partner or unhappiness in marriage interferes with the teamwork between parents necessary to successful socialization. Premarital intercourse is also more common among women who got along badly with one of their parents or who were reared primarily by someone other than their parents. In such circumstances the united front of both parents teaching the norms of behavior is clearly broken.

As for the methods used in raising children, Chesser finds that intercourse is linked to parental discipline that is either too weak or too strong, and particularly to frequent physical punishment. In Ehrmann's research (1959: 95) also, irregularity of discipline is strikingly related to intercourse for girls. These factors represent inadequacies in the child-rearing process. Harsh discipline and excessive punishment produce rebelliousness against parental standards. Weak discipline means that the child remains untaught; irregular discipline that he is confused about what the parents want. Such conditions result in weak consciences and hence less self-control over sexual intimacy.

*Emotional Disturbance.* An inevitable consequence of unhappy family backgrounds and inadequate child-rearing processes is emotional difficulty for the child. We would expect from what has already been discovered that premarital intimacy is also associated with emotional disturbance.

The evidence to support this generalization is indirect but suggestive. Chesser finds that girls whose own childhoods were unhappy are more apt to have premarital intercourse. Reevy (1959) finds heavy petting and sexual intercourse more common among girls who score low on the Adams Marital Happiness Prediction Inventory. Since this is "a personality inventory of 285 items derived from four other personality tests," it means that sexual intimacy tends to be engaged in by individuals whose personality characteristics are unfavorable from a mental hygiene point of view. Part of their motivation for intimate relationships is their search for emotional security.

People who engage in the most intimate behavior seem on the one hand to lack the interpersonal finesse that comes with education and emo-

tional stability, and on the other hand lack the self-control that comes with successful socialization at home and at church. In short their impulses are stronger and their inhibitions weaker.

This is not to say that sexual intimacy prior to marriage always presents such a sorry picture. As usual in the social sciences we are discussing shades of gray rather than black and white differences. However, the background factors in sexual intimacy are generally several shades darker than the picture presented by those who are more restrained before marriage:

My sex education from my parents was very limited. When I was in high school I used to read all the sexy novels I could get hold of so that I could find out all about it. The first time a fellow tried to make out with me I thought he must be insane, but as time went by and I gained knowledge and experience in the field of sex, I became less frightened of any type of experience along that line. I had no guilt feelings because of my actions and desires. Before I actually participated in any sexual activities I had lost my religion and broken all ideological ties with my family.

#### CIRCUMSTANCES OF SEXUAL INVOLVEMENT

So far we have noted the kinds of people who become most intimate before marriage but have paid relatively little attention to the circumstances under which they do so. While our interest is primarily in circumstances that lead directly to marriage (that is, serious courtship), more casual experiences provide background for the sexual aspect of marriage just as all sorts of dating are relevant to marriage.

*Casual vs. Serious Liaisons.* Differences in the seriousness of relationships explain the striking differences in sexual involvement of middle-class men versus women. Whereas the typical woman is intimate only with her fiancé, men often have relationships with women whom they would never consider marrying (see Table 5-3).

The appreciable number of men who have premarital intercourse only with women whom they do not marry reflects the "double standard"

**Table 5-3—Premarital Intercourse with Marriage Partner and Others, by Sex**

Partner in Premarital Intercourse	Men	Women
None	32%	53%
Spouse only	17	36
Spouse and others	28	10
Others only	22	2
Total	99%	101%
No. of cases	580	604

Adapted from Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 330. Source: College-educated couples in Chicago, 1940-43.

which tolerates sexual relations with lower-status women but not with the fiancée. In some cases the "other" person represented in this table was a temporary fiancée. Since a third of Burgess and Wallin's individuals had been engaged before, sexual relations can occur within engagements that do not end in marriage. This probably accounts for many of the women who have intercourse with "other" men. It does not explain the net difference between men and women.

Table 5-3 in general shows that most college-educated women remain chaste until marriage, but that for those who do not, intercourse is usually restricted to the eventual marriage partner. Their husbands, by contrast, are apt to have had sexual relationships with other women. Indeed, it is not unusual for the man's view to be that premarital relations are proper only outside of engagement.

**Table 5-4—Maximum Intimacy for College Men and Women with Friends and Lovers**

Maximum Intimacy	MEN		WOMEN	
	With Friends	With Lovers	With Friends	With Lovers
Holding hands	4%	0%	0%	0%
Necking, light petting	18	36	82	42
Heavy petting	18	40	12	41
Sexual intercourse	60	24	6	17
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of cases	50	45	50	42

Adapted from Ehrmann, 1959: 179.

This contrast between the tendency of men to be more intimate with casual partners whereas women are more intimate with serious ones can be seen even more clearly in Table 5-4. When dating relationships are compared in which love is present or absent, men are much less intimate with the women they love than with those for whom they have little feeling. By contrast, women are far more intimate with those they love.

To understand who the nonfiancées are that college-educated men have intercourse with, let's turn to Kirkendall's report on the sexual experiences of 200 Oregon State College men (1961). These men were twenty years old, on the average, when they were interviewed. Only men who had already had sexual relations were studied. They averaged more than three partners apiece.

As the bottom row of Table 5-5 shows, 14 per cent of these partners were prostitutes and 18 per cent were girls picked up exclusively for sexual purposes. The largest single category I have labeled "exploitive dates." These dates are purely means to the end of obtaining intercourse, for the man reports no feeling for the girl as such. In "friendly dates,"



**Table 5-5—Time Interval to Intercourse by Nature of Partner for College Men**

Time Prior to Intercourse	NATURE OF PARTNER					
	Prostitute	Pick-up	Exploitive Date	Friendly Date	Steady Date	Fiancée
Less than one week	100%	96%	32%	7%	0%	0%
One week to two months	0	3	43	17	2	0
Two to twelve months	0	1	18	56	36	20
Over one year	0	0	7	20	62	80
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of cases	91	116	219	112	93	25
Horizontal % of total liaisons	14%	18%	33%	17%	14%	4%

Adapted from Kirkendall, 1961: 258. Source: 200 men students at Oregon State College, 1952 ff.

the possibility of intercourse arises after dating begins with acquaintances or friends. "Steady dates" involve "considerable emotional attachment." The small proportion of fiancées represented in this picture reflects the fact that many of these men had not yet been engaged to anyone.

Table 5-5 shows how large a proportion of the sexual experiences of college men have been thoroughly sexual in their motivation. The differences between types of partners in length of acquaintance is, of course, highly correlated with the definitions of the types. Nevertheless, it illustrates how widely the knowledge of one another varies under these contrasting circumstances. Only in steady dating and engagement is the time lapse sufficient to build genuinely personal relationships.

In view of Table 5-5 it seems fair to say that *most* of the premarital intercourse of college men is exploitive in nature rather than expressive of love. Most of the liaisons involved are highly casual affairs; very few of them are serious (at least up to age twenty-one).

Closely correlated with the casualness of male experience is the fact that prior to intercourse little communication occurs between partners about such subjects as marriage, possible pregnancy, or even whether to have intercourse itself. Rather, the man's "line" is usually indirect, and both partners rely heavily on nonverbal gestures and symbols:

I remember many first dates when I would try constantly to figure out what the girl was thinking of me. What did different signs mean? Why did she leave her arm waving by her side? This meant it was all right to hold hands. I would cautiously start swinging at exactly 180 degrees out of phase with hers. Sooner or later there would be a delightful collision of hands and thus the first step toward a physical love was achieved.

One reason for relying on nonverbal communication is that it is more ambiguous. The male is able to seduce the girl by easy stages, sometimes without her realizing what is happening. To speak openly about sex would seem too blatant and invite a rebuff. Subtlety in literally "feeling each other out" leads to progressive intimacy without ever making an

explicit mutual decision. Kirkendall concludes that "communication about sex is very difficult. Generally speaking it seems easier to engage in actual intercourse than it is to refer openly to it."

There are exceptions, however, particularly within engagement. In Kirkendall's sample nearly half the "experienced" engaged couples communicate extensively about intercourse before engaging in it. Most of their talk is understanding in nature rather than simply argumentative or persuasive. In general the more serious the relationship, the higher the quality of interaction between the partners as measured by the amount and kind of communication and by willingness to assume responsibility for the consequences of their behavior (such as pregnancy). Taken as a whole, however, most of the sexual experience of the Oregon men is irresponsible and exploitive, violating the qualities of personalized relationships.

*Duration of the Relationship.* Although many men are *less* intimate with serious partners than with casual ones, within any given relationship the longer it exists the more intimate it tends to become. This is especially true of engaged couples. Thus, Burgess and Wallin (1953: 335) found that intercourse occurred in only 39 per cent of engagements shorter than nine months compared to 50 per cent of those lasting more than fifteen months.

In long engagements the progression of intimacy has more time to work and the goal of marriage is farther away. Hence, waiting for marriage becomes increasingly difficult as engagements are prolonged.

*Physical Circumstances.* In Kinsey's rather high-status female sample, premarital intercourse usually took place in the girl's own home or apartment or in the man's (1953: 311). Rented quarters, automobiles, and outdoor locations were used less frequently, although many couples resorted to them occasionally. Kinsey also notes that on the whole premarital intercourse is more leisurely than marital intercourse. Whereas for married couples sexual relations tend to be taken for granted and gotten over with, premarital relations must be worked up to more persuasively. Hence, there is more elaborate petting and foreplay preceding the intercourse itself.

## The Consequences of Premarital Intimacy

Premarital intimacy varies so enormously in degree and in quality that its consequences are equally diverse. Even when discussion is limited to a single type of intimacy, the consequences are affected by a whole complex of situational variables. Despite the complications the range of potential consequences must be explored. They include physical, psycho-

logical, and interpersonal consequences. For the sake of simplicity the discussion will concentrate on complete intimacy rather than lesser degrees.

### PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

The physical consequences of complete sexual relations are largely unique. Short of genital apposition, conception is impossible and venereal infection far less likely.

*Venereal Disease.* Since relatively few middle-class young people suffer from untreated venereal disease, this hazard is correspondingly slight in sexual relations restricted to that class level. However, despite the increased efficacy of modern drugs, these diseases have been spreading in recent years. Hence, this consequence cannot be ignored entirely even in the middle class. It is encountered especially often in intercourse with prostitutes and casual pick-ups whose promiscuity exposes them to a high risk of infection.

Unfortunately, Kinsey gives no data on venereal infections experienced by his male sample (for whom the problem is most common). Among his female respondents, most of whom were middle class, one in every forty engaging in premarital intercourse contracted a venereal disease as a result (1953: 345).

*Premarital Pregnancy.* Premarital conception is a far more common consequence. Almost one-fifth of the sexually experienced women in Kinsey's sample had at least one premarital pregnancy (p. 327). The risk of conception depends on the frequency of intercourse (before as well as after marriage). According to Kinsey's computations conception occurs once in every thousand experiences of intercourse. That it should happen even this often reflects failure to practice proper conception control. When intercourse occurs under the influence of alcohol or of sudden passion, contraceptive practice is apt to be inadequate.

The secondary consequences of premarital pregnancy are not entirely physical but may be discussed here for the sake of simplicity. They include abortion, illegitimacy, and premature marriage.

*Abortion.* In Kinsey's sample (and presumably in the United States generally) the most common outcome of premarital pregnancy is that the woman arranges for an induced abortion, usually at the hands of an M.D. This was the fate of three-fourths of all the premarital pregnancies reported to Kinsey (Gebhard, 1958: 65).

Induced abortion under these circumstances is an illegal operation. The average cost is several hundred dollars, depending partly on the patient's ability to pay and partly on the doctor's risk of arrest (p. 202). Two-thirds of the unmarried women interviewed by Kinsey about their abortions reported no unfavorable consequences. However,

18 per cent reported various post-operative physical complications, 14 per cent negative emotional reactions, and 4 per cent social repercussions such as gossip (p. 205).

*Illegitimacy.* Rearing a child out of wedlock is the rarest option for the middle-class girl who finds herself pregnant. Only 5 per cent of Kinsey's sample chose this way out, and these were concentrated in the lower status segment of the group (pp. 65-66). Recent Census figures show that illegitimacy in the United States is increasing, especially among Negroes. In low-status families the illegitimate child is often raised by the maternal grandmother and comes to look upon its mother as a kind of big sister. In middle-class circles illegitimate children are usually placed for adoption where they help meet the desires of sterile married couples for adoptive children.

*Premature Marriage.* Nineteen per cent of Kinsey's premarital pregnancy cases led to marriage. A few of these married couples also secured abortions but most of them had live births (p. 57). Many of these couples planned to marry eventually anyway. However, an undesired pregnancy raises extra problems. When couples marry sooner than expected, the compatibility testing process may be disrupted, so that couples of doubtful compatibility get married who otherwise would have broken up. Doubt whether the husband married her because he loved her rather than just because she was pregnant may afflict such a wife the rest of her life and give him an excuse to shirk his marital responsibilities or abandon them altogether.

Premature marriage and parenthood for young students normally terminates the wife's education and imposes extra burdens on the husband's completion of his training. Extra burdens also fall on the husband-wife relationship when the complications of pregnancy and parenthood are added to the crucial first year of marriage.

Such problems create a divorce rate for premaritally pregnant couples almost twice the usual rate. Moreover, these divorces are resorted to unusually fast (Christensen and Meissner). The more immature the couple and the less compatible they are, the greater the likelihood of divorce. Under the circumstances, having an illegitimate child adopted may have fewer negative repercussions than marrying prematurely.

*Heightened Sexuality.* Chapter 18 describes how sexual responsiveness in married women awakens gradually through sexual experience. Whether it is good or bad for this awakening to occur before marriage depends on one's value system. That it is one of the physical consequences of premarital intimacy is suggested in the following case:

When we first started going together, Sarah was rather cold and I could tell that she was a virgin. I told her the "facts of life" which were all pretty new to her. At first she was against petting, but I gradually worked around

to it. After a while she discovered that she enjoyed it too, and now she's even more eager than I am.

When sexual feelings are aroused, the physiological tendency is toward release through climax. Most petting, however, stops short of this point. Only a third of the men and women who engage in petting *ever* experience orgasm as a result (Kinsey, 1953: 267). Hence for most individuals most of the time petting means stimulation without release.

Some couples are impelled by this heightened tension to sexual intercourse. Other individuals find release through masturbation after the date is over. For the rest there remains the problem of living under tension. A few men and women experience localized pain in the genital region (p. 263). Far more common are simple frustration and preoccupation with this frustration. When anyone is sexually aroused, it's difficult to think of anything else. If arousal is intense, the sense of frustration may be acute. After enough time has passed (perhaps in such distractions as the traditional cold shower or vigorous exercise), passions may cool. The physical effects of petting are, however, keynoted in the word "frustration":

We've done so much petting that it's become a natural part of our life. But it's been quite frustrating for both of us. Petting gets you all worked up but then you have to stop. I don't like it but I do.

"I don't like it but I do." Along with negative feelings of frustration go positive sensations—the pleasures of sensual stimulation. In fact frustration implies not simply a negative but an ambivalent situation. Petting short of climax means an appetite whetted but unfed, a thirsty man given salt tablets instead of water. Frustration—fun as far as it goes "but then you have to stop."

Petting to climax or sexual intercourse provide release from sexual tension. This does not mean, however, that sexual desire is reduced for long. A new dimension of awareness is added to the girl's life, creating a desire for repeated sexual experience with the same partner and sometimes with other partners too. In extreme cases once sexual feelings have awakened, it is difficult to re-establish self-control. After the wall of inhibition has been shattered, subsequent breakthroughs are all too easy:

Having gotten involved in premarital sexual relations, I feel now like a widow or a divorcee must feel. My sexual feelings have been aroused to the place where I find it impossible to go only half way with a fellow. As a result of my previous experience, any physical contact makes me lose control. Even kissing can get me started and the only really comfortable solution is not to date at all.

The physical effects of sexual intimacy on the male are less clear. Short of ejaculation, tension is heightened for him too. When intimacy produces release, the temporary reduction in sexual appetite sometimes

produces disgust with the partner. Intercourse in particular involves going the limit and therefore shifts the attitude toward the partner from anticipation to fulfillment, but here we have crossed the borderline to psychological and interpersonal consequences.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

In comparison to such tangible effects as pregnancy, abortion, and disease, the emotional consequences of intimacy are difficult to measure. Feelings don't come in all-or-none doses, and the kinds of comments available depend on the wording of questions and the context in which they are asked. So research results in this area must be treated with a good deal of caution.

*Regret.* How many of those who are sexually intimate regret it? The great majority of Kinsey's respondents who engaged in premarital intercourse say that they have no regrets. Some of this may be just rationalizing, since human beings have a way of adapting their attitudes to the facts of their lives. Nevertheless, the proportion is strikingly high.

It is important to remember that selective processes determine who has intercourse in the first place. By and large, it is those who feel it is right who engage in it—and consequently do not regret it. Such justifications are reported in the upper categories of Table 5-6.

**Table 5-6—Feelings Accompanying Premarital Intercourse for Engaged Men and Women**

Accompanying Feeling	Men	Women
Feeling of rightness because of:		
Relief from physical tension	61%	45%
Going to be married	34	28
Our private affair	22	20
Frequent among engaged couples	4	4
Fear of social disapproval	23	22
Fear of pregnancy	20	26
Sense of guilt	4	16
No. of cases	74	69

Adapted from Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 375. Reciprocal percentages of respondents did not experience the particular feeling.

A sense of relief from physical tension and fear of pregnancy deal with physical consequences we have already discussed. Of interest now is the fact that substantial proportions of these engaged couples had intercourse *because* they felt it was right when marriage was close at hand or when other couples were doing the same thing or because they felt what they did was nobody else's business. Given such attitudes, it is not likely that people will later regret what they have done, unless the

experience turns out to be worse than they expected. Apparently, such disillusionment is rarely sufficient to sour the whole experience.

Conversely, most of those who believe that premarital intercourse is wrong refrain from it. Were they to violate their beliefs, regret would be expected.

However, between these two groups of nonregretting indulgers and potentially regretting abstainers is a borderline group who do regret their behavior. Such regret is far from universal, but it is a hazard which must be considered. When it occurs, it illustrates the varied meanings of intimacy to different sorts of persons under varying circumstances.

Table 5-6 shows that regret is more common for women. More of the men value the physical relief derived from climax, while the women worry more often about pregnancy. In the psychological area more men are sure of the rightness of what they have done, whereas guilt feelings are almost exclusively a feminine reaction. Given the more conservative views of women and the fact that they are more often seduced against their better judgment, the feminine guilt hazard is greater. When religious devoutness and the rigid moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are added to these general factors, guilt is even more common. Although devout Catholic women seldom violate their taboo on premarital intercourse, fully half of those who do subsequently regret it (Kinsey, 1953: 345). In general the stronger one's convictions that intimacy is wrong, the more likely one is to have regrets.

Convictions are not always conscious. Sometimes the residue of family attitudes and religious training is not fully appreciated until faced with a traumatic experience:

Through attending discussions on boy-girl relations, I had heard that petting was not wise. Until I was eighteen I didn't know what petting really was. I found out the hard way. During the course of an evening my date and I talked a lot about our attitudes toward sex and I told him I did not believe in petting. Before I got home that night I knew what petting meant. The experience was a terrific emotional shock which took me a couple of weeks to get over.

The previous case is an extreme one, reflecting the suddenness of betrayal into forbidden experience. When initiation is more gradual, the result may be troublesome doubts rather than pronounced guilt feelings:

Sometimes I wonder whether I'm getting too uninhibited. My fiancé stimulated my sexual feelings for the first time, and now I feel that my actions with him are a little degrading or animalistic. I've always been rather reserved, but now I'm swinging the other way. Am I becoming a respectable prostitute? I've always been regarded as a refined girl and I still want to be.

How strong the qualms and regrets about intimacy will be depends on three factors: the strength of one's moral scruples; the degree of intimacy;

the crudity or sensitivity with which intimacy occurs. Strength of qualms and regrets in turn reflects the kind of relationship between the partners. Where it is exploitive or merely casual, regrets are more likely than when the participants love and cherish each other.

**Table 5-7—Feeling of Having Gone too Far in Sexual Intimacy, by Stage in Courtship, for College Men and Women**

Degree of Intimacy	Stage in Courtship	Men	Women
Petting	Casual dating	25%	54%
	Going steady	32	37
	Engagement	31	26
Intercourse	Casual dating	44	65
	Going steady	44	61
	Engagement	41	41

Adapted from Bell and Blumberg, 1960: 62. Source: 160 men and 250 women students at Temple University (Philadelphia). Reciprocal percentages of respondents never felt that they had gone too far.

Table 5-7 shows how the last two factors interact. Regret is expressed more often by those who had intercourse than by those who stopped with petting. Regret is also more common when any given degree of intimacy occurs prematurely. The less committed the couple, the more regrettable petting or intercourse seems, especially to the woman. Only when intimacy occurs within a context of love and mutual commitment is regret apt to be avoided. When the genuineness of commitment begins to be questioned, intimate behavior correspondingly palls—at least for the girl:

I've been going with Hal for two years now and during most of that time we've been living together on weekends. At first it seemed to me to be all right, but lately I've been so depressed that I can't concentrate on my school work. Hal says he won't have enough money to marry me for another two years, so I'm afraid our present relationship is going to continue on for a long time to come. I don't see how I can go on feeling so guilty this way. I've made up my mind that either he marries me in June when I graduate or else I'm going to get a job so far away that I don't have to see him any more.

In Kinsey's sample, intercourse with the fiancé is usually limited to the year immediately preceding marriage (p. 336). The reaction to intercourse hinges on the certainty with which the couple are moving toward marriage. The less committed they are, the more regret. Similarly, regret is twice as common for women who had intercourse with men they did not marry as for those who restricted intercourse to engagements which culminated in marriage (p. 345).

To sum up, regret is least when intimacy is restricted to the fiancé in the months immediately before marriage, when the degree of intimacy



is limited, and when the individuals involved have been reared in a secular environment.

However, even women who have no personal regrets about not being virgin at marriage say they wouldn't like their children to have premarital intercourse (Chesser, 1957: 342-43). Apparently, complete intimacy is seldom traumatic enough for those who are "unscrupulous" enough to indulge in it to make it regrettable. On the other hand, it isn't sufficiently rewarding (at least for the female partner) to make it positively commendable. The psychological consequences of premarital intimacy are therefore not generally negative for those who choose it, but it does not follow that the consequences are positive enough to make experienced women recommend that others follow their example.

#### INTERPERSONAL CONSEQUENCES OF PREMARITAL INTIMACY

Crucially important to a book on marriage is the question of the effects of intimate behavior on the relationship between partners. The chief short-range question is whether intimacy strengthens or weakens the relationship; that is, does it increase or decrease the likelihood that couples will marry? In the long run how is premarital intimacy related to marital sexual adjustment and to marital satisfaction in general?

*Before Marriage.* We have already seen that premarital intercourse (a) sometimes results in pregnancy which (b) sometimes results in marriages which (c) sometimes would not have occurred otherwise. Indeed, Kirkendall (1961) reports that some girls try to become pregnant in order to improve their chances of marriage. However, since only 19 per cent of Kinsey's pregnant girls married the boy under these circumstances, this connection between intimacy and marriage is not very dependable.

With the exception of such "shot-gun" marriages, intimacy is associated more closely with broken relationships than with strengthened ones. Burgess and Wallin found that almost twice as many engagements were broken (18.2 per cent *vs.* 10.9 per cent) among couples who had intercourse as among those who did not, and the more frequent the intercourse the greater the number of rings returned (recomputed from Burgess and Wallin's Chart 43, p. 357).

What are some possible reasons why intimacy disrupts affectional bonds? Intercourse alters the character of the relationship from attraction to fulfillment, from anticipation to satiation, from the appeal of the unknown to boredom with the known. In short, romance tends to be transformed into disillusionment (see Blood, 1952).

At least from the standpoint of male psychology sexual inaccessibility heightens the partner's desirability, increasing the desire to marry her. Sexual intimacy weakens the male's desire to continue the relationship.

Especially is this true for double-standard males whose desire to conquer is combined with disgust for the victim which automatically disqualifies her for marriage.

The more secure the relationship, the less the likelihood that this threat will be disruptive. This is why intercourse is least threatening within marriage, though even then the problem of adultery arises. After marriage the social sanctions of the wedding ceremony, the economic interdependency of the common household, and the advent of children protect the marital relationship against dissolving in the acids of disillusionment.

Prior to marriage the greatest security is found in engagement to marry, especially when the engagement period is short, the wedding date set, and compatibility high. The effect of intimacy depends on the balance of forces leading toward marriage and away from it.

In general, intimacy decreases the momentum toward marriage for the man. At least the sexual incentive is reduced, the last barrier has already been penetrated, the ultimate intimacy already achieved. For the girl, however, intimacy often has the opposite effect. Her desire to marry may increase to guarantee economic support and social security in case of pregnancy, and because of the sense of having lost something of value with her virginity—the fear of becoming a “left-over,” second-hand commodity in the competition for husbands should her partner drop her. As a result, she may cling to a relationship that otherwise is defective. Even guilt feelings and regret may accentuate a feeling of desperate attachment.

The preceding paragraphs attempt to describe observable differences in the general characteristics of male versus female reactions to premarital intercourse. To emphasize how great the variations are in the quality of such experiences and their effects on the couple's relationship, here is a case characterized by unusual mutuality of understanding:

Until the eighth month of our engagement, the limit of our physical intimacy was a deep kiss. From that point forward, we progressed gradually through light petting to heavy petting, and, finally, nine months later, to intercourse. Neither of us had had prior sexual experience other than kissing, and, in retrospect, we have enjoyed learning together.

Generally, I took the lead, but we had a tacit agreement that we would make progress slowly, mixing discussion with discovery. Before and after progressing to the next level, we both freely gave our views concerning the implications of the act, our questions about each other's physiology, and our attitudes toward what we were doing. This process of mutual learning and mutual understanding was, and is, both a very valuable and a very cherished experience to us.

Where premarital intercourse occurs against such a background of intimate acquaintance, mature love, and complete commitment to marriage, it may increase the couple's feeling of closeness. Kirkendall (1956)

points out, however, that other couples gain an analogous feeling of unity from cooperating in saving sexual relations for marriage. For college students, at least, Kirkendall's case histories indicate that "in the great majority of situations, premarital intercourse has negative consequences for personal interrelationships." Only a small number of couples seem able to prepare the way for premarital intercourse by full and free discussion, to "place the importance of their total relationship ahead of sex," and to be motivated primarily by love for each other. Only under these rare circumstances, Kirkendall (1955) believes, do couples "have a chance to engage in premarital intercourse without damaging results to their interrelationships."

In lesser degrees of sexual intimacy, a different set of factors applies. No anxiety about pregnancy creates desperate attachment for the girl. Nor is satiation a problem for the man. On the contrary, intimacy short of the ultimate generally increases the sexual appetite. When two people have little else in common, petting may intensify an infatuation which otherwise would be broken:

I don't understand exactly why I didn't leave Sally alone from the time we first started petting, but for some reason I couldn't. I knew it wasn't good for me because I was constantly in a state of nervous excitement when she was in sight. The worst part was that she attracted me even while I wished she wouldn't excite me so. But I knew she didn't care about me except as a means of sexual gratification. I tried several times to lift the relationship above the level of petting, but my good resolutions always broke down.

When a couple start petting before they develop a close companionship, the sexual aspects of the relationship are likely to dominate it. When the relationship is basically sound, partial intimacy within the limits of both partners' convictions is more likely to strengthen and enrich it.

What happens when intimacy is initiated by one partner before the other is ready? Such offenses are almost exclusively male initiated (not that girls never initiate sexual activity, but their partners are seldom unready for it!). Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) find that masculine aggression at Indiana University most often provokes anger at the male, though guilt reactions, fear of the male's aggressiveness, and disgust or disillusionment with him are also widespread. Since the girls involved are by definition offended, it is not surprising that they often refuse dates with the men subsequently. Beyond this they also warn their girl friends against dating them too. However, when couples are already committed to going steady or engagement before the offense occurs, breaking up is not quite so common although still a noticeable tendency. If the man's behavior is sufficiently aggressive or violent, even engagements are terminated abruptly.

This study dramatizes the difference between intimacy that expresses mutual love and that which pushes the girl farther and faster than she is prepared to go. In the former, intimacy may strengthen the couple's relationship; in the latter, the same degree of intimacy is likely to ruin a relationship.

*After Marriage.* On the whole, we have said, premarital intimacy (especially if premature in timing or unlimited in degree) tends to destroy courtship relationships. The same thing can be said after marriage, although the impact of premarital events disappears gradually with the passage of time.

Locke (1951: 136-37) found that divorced men and women were more apt to have had premarital intercourse than happily married couples. The differences between the two groups were especially great with respect to promiscuous behavior; that is, divorced people were more apt to have intercourse with several people before marriage, not just with the future spouse. Terman (1938: 325) similarly found marital happiness greatest among couples who saved intercourse for marriage, next where it was restricted to the engagement partner, and lowest where multiple partners were involved. Burgess and Wallin (1953: 368-70) also found that the more frequently couples had premarital relations with each other, the lower their marital happiness, satisfaction, love for one another, and confidence in the permanence of their marriage.

In general, then, the kind of people who engage in premarital intercourse have less happy marriages and more frequent divorces. Premarital intercourse contributes to such marital difficulties by paving the way to extramarital intercourse. Those who do not consider wedding vows necessary to intercourse before marriage are not likely to do so afterward, either. In Kinsey's female sample those with premarital intercourse were more than twice as apt to engage in extramarital intercourse as women who went into marriage chaste (29 per cent versus 13 per cent; 1953: 427).

Of course, premarital intimacy is not a single-factor cause of such marital problems. It is part of a broader complex of irreligiosity, emotional instability, and personal inadequacy which handicaps the creation and maintenance of stable personal relationships before and during marriage. The more extreme the intimacy in degree and the more promiscuous the circumstances, the more it violates the personal attitudes and behavior patterns prerequisite to success in marriage.

These generalizations seem warranted in spite of the fact that the initial *sexual* satisfaction of sexually experienced wives excels that of novices. For example, Kanin and Howard find that wives with previous experience in intercourse are more satisfied with their coital experience during the first two weeks of marriage. In fact, the greater their premarital intimacy, the greater their honeymoon sexual satisfaction. Al-

though Chesser's experienced women report the same sexual advantage on the honeymoon, their margin diminishes when queried about the first few months of marriage and disappears altogether after that (1957: 337).

These findings tie in with the earlier point that one of the consequences of premarital intimacy is heightened sexuality. Familiarity with sexual experience comes slowly, and the sooner a woman begins, the sooner sexual responsiveness arises. This does not mean that the sooner one begins, the more satisfactory the initial experiences, even from the purely sexual point of view. If any physical difference exists at all, we would expect it to be in the opposite direction. So given the same *amount* of sexual experience, we would not expect female physical responsiveness to differ greatly one way or the other. And even though experienced men and women have a head start on the purely sexual aspects of marriage, they are generally worse off in other respects. Perhaps, indeed, the wife's sexual responsiveness should be classified as a *physical* consequence of intimacy, rather than an interpersonal one.

In summary, the main interpersonal consequences of premarital intimacy seem to be instability both before and after marriage. However, the unstabilizing effects depend on the degree of intimacy, the number of partners involved, and the extent to which the sexual experiences involve exploitation and irresponsibility. Intimacy is, after all, one form of interaction and therefore an evidence of the behavior patterns the individual will carry over into marriage.

## The Control of Premarital Intimacy

So far our discussion of premarital intimacy has been largely descriptive: what people do, why they do it, and what the consequences are. We come now to the question of codes or standards, what people feel they *ought* to do, and how they can (and actually do) control their behavior in line with their norms.

### CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHIES

Four main philosophies about premarital intimacy exist in the United States, one double standard and three single standards—conservative, conditional liberal, and unconditional liberal. Under the *double standard* premarital intercourse is acceptable for men but not for women. Since intercourse cannot be had by men apart from women, this means that only deviant women such as prostitutes and other low-status women have intercourse and thereby render themselves in the men's eyes ineligible for

marriage. The *conservative single standard* bans intercourse for both sexes. The *conditional liberal standard* permits it under certain conditions such as within engagement or more broadly between people who are in love. The *unconditional single standard* views sexual intimacy as proper under any and all circumstances, rejecting the idea that love should be present.

The distribution of these standards among Ehrmann's interviewees who had been in love is given in Table 5-8. Since the number of cases is small, the distribution may not be representative of American student thinking.

**Table 5-8—Premarital Sexual Philosophies of College Men and Women**

<i>Sexual Philosophy</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Double standard	33%	0%
Conservative single standard	20	86
Conditional liberal standard	5	7
Unconditional liberal standard	42	7
Total	100%	100%
No. of cases	45	42

Adapted from Ehrmann, 1959: 189.

The most striking characteristic of Table 5-8 is the sharp contrast between male and female thinking. The vast majority of women students believe that premarital intercourse is undesirable for both sexes. The men, on the other hand, either think it is right for both sexes or at least for themselves. This split means that it is rare for any given couple to have the same philosophy on this crucial aspect of their relationship. If instead of mixing them up at random, we were to pair off Ehrmann's men and women students as well as possible, no more than a third at best could see eye to eye.

*An Evaluation of Sexual Philosophies.* From the standpoint of marriage can such philosophies be ranked as "better" or "worse"? This is a controversial question, a matter of judgment. It seems to me that from the standpoint of our "personal relationship" frame of reference and of the facts reviewed in this chapter, certain inferences can be drawn.

The double standard ranks lowest because it involves the exploitation of low-status women, accustoming the male to attitudes of contempt toward his sexual partners. The unconditional liberal standard is one notch above it, having at least the virtue of mutuality. However, both standards suffer the disadvantage of separating sex from love, whereas the ideal relationship, as this chapter's title suggests, is for sex to express love. When the two are separated, the sex partner is viewed too narrowly. The relationship is merely sexual rather than fully personal. Love is necessary to guarantee that a personalized relationship exists. It also

guarantees that the relationship is what Erich Fromm (1956) would call a mutually giving one instead of mutual exploitation (as unconditional liberalism is apt to be).

The conditional liberal and the conservative standards agree that love is prerequisite for intimacy. They differ on whether marriage is necessary in addition. Here I think the choice must be made in terms of the long-range consequences. From the standpoint of the quality of the immediate experience (that is, the amount of mutual giving, person-centeredness, understanding, and communication), there may be little difference between love and marriage. But waiting for marriage has two long-range advantages: (1) it provides a secure setting for children conceived from sexual intercourse; (2) drawing a sexual distinction between "not-marriage" and marriage accentuates the importance of marriage and contributes to its stability.

From the sociological point of view both illegitimacy and divorce are social problems. Premarital chastity effectively prevents the former and reduces the latter. We have already cited the facts of marital instability and adultery associated with premarital intercourse. Here, we wish to make a new point, namely that the sharper the boundary between one social status and another and the more elaborate the ceremonies marking the transition, the greater the solidarity of the social groups involved. Premarital intercourse blurs the distinction between courtship and marriage. One consequence of this vagueness is that couples who have already had intercourse are less apt to take a honeymoon. (Only 47 per cent of Kanin and Howard's sexually experienced couples took a honeymoon compared to 87 per cent of the remainder.) Since they already feel married, why make a point of celebrating their marriage? Presumably people who drift into marriage by easy stages can drift out of it equally easily.

Hence our conclusion: The integration of love and sex is essential to the immediate quality of a sexual relationship, but the limitation of intercourse to marriage contributes to the stability of marriage. Therefore, the conservative single standard may be evaluated as the *ideal* sexual philosophy.

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IDEAL

It is one thing to have an ideal and another to carry it out. For instance, Karen (1959) notes a widespread inconsistency between ideals and practices among students at San Diego Junior College. Violations of their own ideals occur most often under superficial dating conditions when the male "predatory-recreational orientation" is untamed by interest in the partner's welfare. Though women less often violate their own standards, they are not immune to the temptation especially when

faced with what Burgess and Wallin (p. 382) describe as the "frequent and intensive erotic stimulation" that usually precedes final breakthroughs in intimacy. Hence a large proportion of couples encounter difficulties in carrying out their ideals.

What practical steps can increase the likelihood that premarital intimacy will be limited? First, the standard needs to be made clear-cut. Second, the motivation to violate the standard can be reduced. Third, the ideal can be given external support. And last, the premarital period can sometimes be shortened.

*Clarification of the Ideal.* An ambiguous norm invites infractions. When a situation is in doubt, it invites the aggressive partner to test the limits. Since most of the sexual initiative in campus dating is taken by the man (Ehrmann, 1952), and the girl usually has the higher ideals, she is more responsible for expressing her convictions when pressed farther than she wants to go. Instead of simply saying no, she can contribute to the emotional growth of both partners and their relationship by explaining her ideals. Note how one coed dealt with what she called "wandering hand trouble" in casual dating:

The most successful method I found was not just to say "no" and drop the matter, but to stop the fellow and, before he had an opportunity to get mad or feel guilty, to engage him in a serious discussion of the situation. This usually meant finding out his reasons for his undesirable (to me) action, telling him frankly and kindly my reasons for not desiring such conduct, and ending the discussion with a mutual revealing of ideals concerning sex and its ultimate relation to marriage. By this time most fellows would realize that they were acting contrary to what they ultimately desired, and usually this ended the trouble. Often they seemed grateful for the opportunity of serious discussion of what was a problem to them as well as to me. I found that quite frequently the fellow merely was seeking to find out what kind of companion he had. More than one fellow told me that if I had been willing to cooperate without any limitations, he wouldn't have known what to do, merely because that wasn't what he really wanted.

Not all men so readily admit that intimacy was not "what they ultimately desired," but an honest statement of conviction usually evokes the respect to which it is entitled. This is reflected in Ehrmann's report that while sexual behavior on 30 per cent of student dates went no farther because the girl was unwilling, in most cases neither partner tried to go any farther:

This type of control represented usually an equilibrium point that was acceptable to both parties. The male did not try to go beyond it because he knew that the girl would not go farther or because he felt that he ought not to try to go farther in consideration for her moral attitudes. (1952: 326.)

Once the norm is clarified, it is more easily respected. However, discussion often reveals that there are two norms involved in the situation



—the boy's liberal one and the girl's conservative one. In such circumstances sexual intimacy must be reduced to the least common denominator if the conservative partner is not to be offended.

Occasionally girls wonder whether they should ignore their own convictions in order to express their love for the partner. Does the fact that it would be personally distasteful make such sacrifice especially unselfish? Affirmative answers to this question lead only to trouble. In the long run the only way to preserve the self-respect and personal integrity essential to love is by sticking to one's own beliefs. If the partner is not willing to respect this moral integrity, he is not the kind of person to marry. Better to lose one's fiancé than one's self respect.

Norm-clarification is therefore the first step not only for the partner but also for oneself.

*Reduction of Motivation.* How well a norm can be observed depends not only on its strength and clarity but also on the strength of the forces that seek to violate it. Where the norm is sufficiently strong, and especially where it is genuinely held by both partners, few situations could arise that would seriously tempt the couple. But where the norm is weak or held by only one partner, the difference between adherence and nonadherence may depend on the strength of the temptations that arise.

For the girl, conservative dress, language, and gestures reduce her sexual provocativeness. For the couple, drawing the line short reduces the chance that sexual momentum will become self-propelling. For the man, Kinsey's data suggest that masturbation reduces the drive for heterosexual intimacy, thereby making line-drawing easier (1949: 376).

*Social Support.* Sometimes informal chaperonage such as the parents' presence in the house or double-dating provides external support for personal norms. Whether double-dating is supportive, however, depends on whether the other couple shares the same norms. Otherwise the effect can be quite the opposite:

Our problems, such as they were, seemed to be caused by the gang of kids we were with continually. My girl and I were seldom by ourselves in the evening. So the conversation usually was between the three or four couples and when that became quieted down there was probably more necking than if each couple had been alone, because it is extremely difficult to carry on a private conversation when others are with you. Besides, when in Rome . . . !

*Reduction of the Engagement Period.* Maintaining conservative standards is increasingly difficult the longer a couple go together and the closer they come to marriage. Especially after they get engaged, holding the line is difficult. The longer the engagement, the worse the problem. Hence, it is helpful to hold off getting engaged until the wedding date is clearly in view.

## The Place of Intimacy in Courtship

Every couple needs to keep sex under control. Going too far too soon endangers the progress of courtship. Preoccupation with sex can lead to individual guilt feelings, disrupt a promising courtship, or fixate it on a precarious foundation.

The contributions of sex to courtship are not all negative, however. For couples who are deeply in love, adding a physical dimension to the emotional and social aspects of dating may enrich their total relationship and increase their mutual enjoyment.

Usually the physical side of courtship develops spontaneously. Anyone who comes from a home where affection has been freely exchanged between the parents finds it natural to be affectionate in his own dating. When one's own family has been undemonstrative, one function of courtship may be to cultivate more affectionate ways. Gradually the individual can develop toward sexual maturity:

My girlish ideas about love and sex have changed a lot in the last few years. I used to abhor any demonstration of affection. In high school I seldom kissed a date and always felt awkward when I did. As far as sex went, I was really mixed up. About the time I was seven or eight I decided I never wanted to hear anything about sex. When my brother asked my parents about it I would plug my ears and sing songs so I couldn't hear anything. Later in my teens I got in on hen-sessions so I wasn't entirely naive. Fortunately for my mental health I met a boy in college who was able to help me overcome these attitudes. It wasn't an easy or sudden change and Dick has admitted to me that he almost gave up in his attempts to convert me into being able to express myself more completely in a love relationship. However, I progressed slowly as he subtly laid the groundwork until I was gradually able to take the next step. In each case he waited patiently for me to be ready to make the first move.

This fiancé had the patience and skill to nurture his girl in a way only psychotherapy might otherwise have done.

Sexual maturity depends not only on freedom to respond but also on the ability to interact with another person on an adult level. The process of facing up to the challenges this complex area presents can strengthen the total partnership. So the crux of the matter is the couple's willingness to share their thoughts and to arrive at mutual agreement about the physical expression of their love.

# *Readiness for Marriage*

Finding the right partner and developing a personal relationship are only the first two elements in the courtship process. People may be thoroughly compatible and very much in love but not ready for marriage—yet. The remaining issue is whether they are mature enough to take on the responsibilities of marriage. This is primarily a question of age and experience, though in special cases extra problems must be resolved in preparing for marriage. Sometimes these problems are internal—personal residues of unhappy family backgrounds or inadequate child-rearing. Sometimes they are external—practical obstacles that affect the timing of engagement and marriage.

## **Personal Readiness for Marriage**

Couples who get along well on dates may nevertheless lack the resources necessary for optimal married living. Marriage demands more than dating. It embraces more aspects of the participants' lives and requires taking on more responsibility for one another. Besides, within a year or two, problems are added with pregnancy and childbirth. Hence, marriage and parenthood require special skills and resources of the individuals involved.

## EMOTIONAL MATURITY

The crucial concept in personal readiness is emotional maturity. This is a normative concept in developmental psychology which means that the individual has arrived at adulthood. He is no longer a helpless infant, a naive child, or a rebellious adolescent:

Sometimes he acts just like a little boy. He seems to like nothing better than to jump in his car and go racing down the road in a cloud of dust, blowing his horn, and scaring everyone half to death. When I try to get him to be more careful he just grins and goes faster. It irks me the way he has to show off so much.

Just because a man is chronologically an adult doesn't mean he is necessarily mature. It is necessary to define more precisely what maturity is. A mature person is one who has developed *the ability to establish and maintain personal relationships*. Infants lack this ability. Their relationships are parasitical. They depend on those who gratify their needs without being able to give in return. Adolescents, by contrast, are too uneasy with close relationships, too eager to demonstrate their independence, to be able to be secure in their relations with others. Maturity involves both the ability to give (which infants lack) and the ability to receive (which adolescents are wary of). In other words a mature person has the ability to love. The contrast between childish immaturity and adult maturity can be spelled out more precisely in terms of empathy, responsibility, and stability.

*Empathy* is the ability to perceive the feelings of others. Immature individuals are so wrapped up in their own needs that they can't understand how others feel. Newborn babies are completely egocentric, and it takes them long years of experience to learn to recognize and appreciate the feelings of others. This does not mean that they surrender their own identity in the process. But it does involve increasingly recognizing the identity of others.

Beyond merely recognizing others' needs is being willing to assume *responsibility* for meeting them. An immature person may have moments of altruism, even of self-sacrifice. But he shies away from long-term commitments that might interfere with his shifting interests in the future. Getting married, however, means taking on a life-time responsibility for the partner's welfare, entering into a contract to meet her needs to the best of one's ability. Having children is in many respects an even more awful responsibility because of the utter dependence children have on their parents. Besides these moral obligations assumed in entering into personal relationships, there are the instrumental responsibilities for men of supporting a family financially and for women of keeping a family fed and clean-clothed. To the immature such responsibilities are disconcerting. To the mature, they are a challenge:

There is a lot more to being ready for marriage than just being able to handle your own problems. Part of mature love is being able to support and help your husband when he has problems and not depend on him to always be your emotional support. It is being able to stand on your own and being able to help him even when you are already carrying a load of your own.

We have already mentioned the life-long nature of the marriage commitment as one feature of the responsibility involved. At the same time it is an aspect of the *stability* that comes with maturity. Whereas adolescents are so volatile and impulsive that their values and interests change unpredictably, the mature adult has settled down enough to know what he wants out of life. Though life is never static, the pace of his fluctuations has slowed to the place where another person can reasonably hope to keep up with them.

Emotional stability is tested most rigorously in the crises of life. Faced with frustration, a mature person is able to remain sufficiently rational to make the best of the situation, adapting his course of action to surmount new obstacles, or accepting the inevitable with reasonable grace. To an immature person frustration is an occasion for throwing a fit, for having a tantrum. His emotional equilibrium is overwhelmed by feelings of rage, of persecution, or of defeat. Either he charges blindly at the nearest available target (including his family) or else he runs away from his problem into self-pity.

Of course maturity is a matter of degree. None of us can boast that we demonstrate it 100 per cent. Nevertheless, a going marriage requires enough empathy, responsibility, and stability to enable the partners to count on each other through life's vagaries.

Although all human relationships require a good deal of maturity, marriage does so particularly. Because marriage involves interaction at close range and over sustained periods of time, immaturity is especially disastrous. Egocentrism in one partner provokes defensive, counteractive behavior by the other in a vicious cycle. In the unique intimacy of marriage, cyclical behavior generates rapidly and ramifies in many directions. Marriage affords few opportunities for cooling down, for detachment, for breaking vicious cycles once they begin.

To prevent such cycles one mature partner is enough. He can see beneath the partner's demands to his underlying needs, meet them responsibly, and tolerate attacks that would irritate another beyond forgiveness. The more immature the partner is, the greater the strain on one's emotional resources. Even though one mature participant may be the minimum for marital stability, two can cope much more successfully with the burdens of children and external reverses.

Social changes in the American family have made increasing demands on the marriage partners' emotional resourcefulness. In the old days wives were primarily housekeepers and husbands primarily farmers. Their

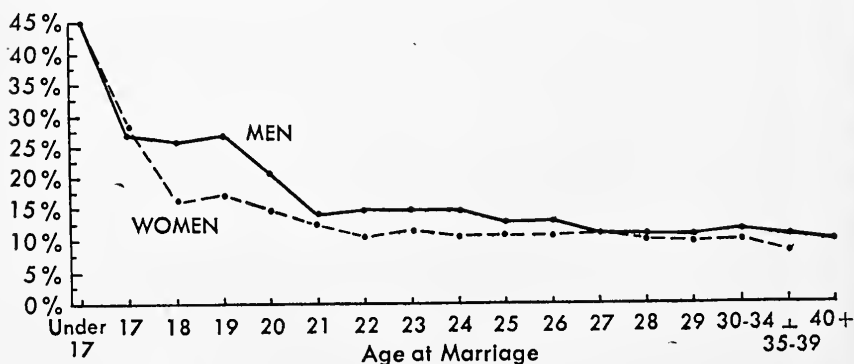
tangible tasks did not depend very much on the personality skills of the role incumbents. An egocentric person can make good pies or crops, indeed may take extra pride in his accomplishments. But an egotist cannot be a good sexual partner, confidant, companion, or emotional therapist in marriage. Since marriage is no longer an economic necessity, its success depends on the partners' ability to devote themselves voluntarily to one another. At the same time the new emphasis on the quality of interaction involves higher ideals and expectations for each other. Hence the maturity of every husband and wife is severely tested. Shorn of the old economic duties, marriage now exposes each partner's ego to full view of the other. If the ego flunks inspection, the marriage loses its *sine qua non*.

*Old Enough to Get Married.* For the average person maturity comes automatically in the process of growing up. It is produced by successful socialization in the family and by experience with others in peer groups, dating, school, and work. Consequently chronological age is a rough index of maturity.

How old does the average person have to be to be ready for marriage? This question is partly answered by the legislatures of the American states. Although particular laws vary, every state sets a minimum age below which marriage is illegal. Typically this minimum is eighteen for boys and sixteen for girls. At such ages marriage is allowed only with written permission from the parents. Only when the boy reaches twenty-one and the girl eighteen are they ordinarily allowed to decide for themselves.

Are these legal minima good definitions of maturity? The fact

Ratio of Divorces to Marriages



Adapted from Manahan, 1953.

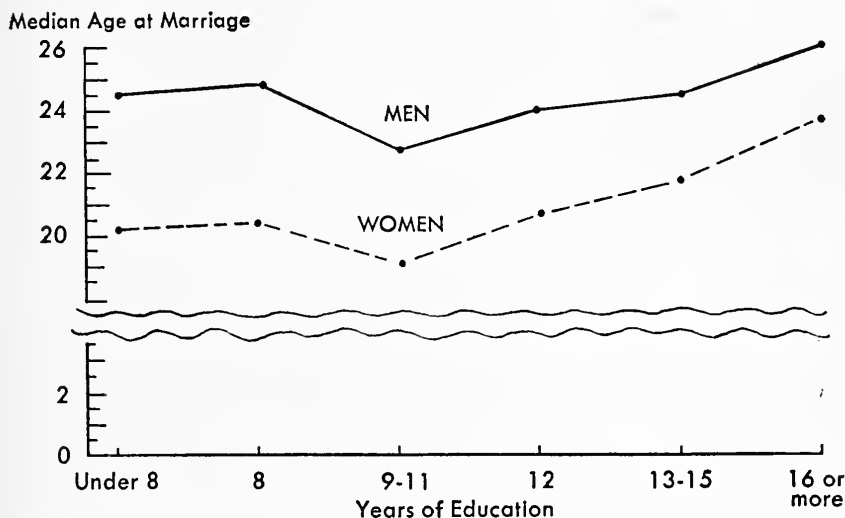
Source: 52,722 first marriages and 8,040 first divorces, 1945-47, Iowa.

**Figure 6-1. Ratio of Divorces to Marriages, by Age at Marriage, for Men and Women**

that divorce rates are highest for those just barely meeting them suggests that they are not adequate (see Fig. 6-1).

Monahan's study shows that the older the age at marriage, the lower the divorce rate. Immaturity is clearly accentuated below the age of twenty-one (especially for men, since they mature later).

Despite the hazards the general trend of age at marriage in the United States continues steadily downward. In 1958 the median age at first marriage was 20.0 for wives and 22.6 for husbands (N.O.V.S.,



Adapted from Glick and Carter, 1958.

Source: National sample of 9,000 marriages, 1947-54.

**Figure 6-2. Age at Marriage of Men and Women, by Years of Education**

1960). However, Figure 6-2 shows that college graduates are markedly older at marriage than the general population. Wives who finish college are almost twenty-four when they marry, and male graduates typically twenty-six.

Although stratification variables are also very much involved, greater maturity at marriage is undoubtedly a factor in the greater marital success of college graduates.

Although younger-than-average marriages do not automatically fail, they face extra hazards which make extra maturity imperative. To put it another way, couples marrying earlier than usual should be sure they are more precociously mature than their contemporaries.

## SOCIAL MATURITY

A person may be emotionally mature and yet not have experienced enough of the normal social life of adolescence to be ready for marriage. "Social maturity" is that aspect of readiness for marriage that stems from the fulfillment of one's measure of adolescent living.

*Enough Dating.* One source of social maturity is a filled quota of dating. One of the delights of adolescence is getting acquainted with new partners. Often at this age pastures look greener on the other side of the fence. As long as marriage is postponed, no legal or moral commitments prevent going over to find out. Individuals who never date more than a handful of persons are apt to feel later that they have missed something and to wonder what others are like. Such curiosity leads middle-aged neo-adolescents on extramarital sprees. Fortunate is the person who realizes before marriage that it's high time to get his fill of variety before settling down to monogamy:

I'm not getting any younger, but I still have a lot of experiencing to do in my relations with men. I don't think I'll be ready to get married for several years yet. My feelings haven't crystallized enough about the kind of man I want. I'm enjoying this freedom from being involved and the chance to flirt with so many men. Right now variety is the spice of life for me!

Sooner or later, the average person discovers that new pastures are not likely to be greener than the ones he's already been in. Instead of exploring further, it becomes more attractive to settle down. How many dates it will take to satisfy the wanderlust of any given person cannot be predicted—maybe a dozen, maybe fifty members of the opposite sex. In any case one characteristic of social maturity is the individual's willingness to write off the potential marriage partners he has not yet met and commit himself to building a relationship with the one at hand.

Dating must be "enough" not only in the number of partners but also as a type of experience. Especially for college-bound young people, the campus whirl is a chapter in life few wish to skip. In the following case even a tentative commitment to a hometown partner did not warrant by-passing the experience of campus social life:

In my Freshman year, there was a strong pull between campus dating and Gene, my high-school steady. It was a very distressing situation for both of us, because neither of us wanted me to be deprived of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, yet Gene was afraid to lose me, and I was a little afraid to relax completely for fear that I might decide to like someone else. At the time, although I liked Gene intensely, thought I loved him, surely did not want to hurt him, the thrill of campus dating was far too wonderful to give up for any mortal man. At this point I can look back with satisfaction and say that I



went to enough campus functions to get it out of my system and I am very happy and content to settle down with the boy who was wonderful and kind and patient enough to wait for me while I had my fling.

Once an individual begins to tire of the superficiality and insecurity of dating, he is ready for marriage in this respect. Anyone who has had a broad and satisfying dating pattern is not likely to feel later that he was shortchanged in his social life. Having been around enough for the social whirl to become less fascinating, he can concentrate now on the one who interests him most.

*Enough Single Life.* Besides doing enough dating, many young adults want to be independent for a while. Having just become emancipated from their parents, it's too soon to take on the bonds of matrimony.

Single life has advantages. Spare time can be used as one sees fit. Jobs can be changed with relative ease. Travel is limited only by the time and money available. Nobody else's wishes have to be consulted nor moods catered to.

Girls sometimes sense an extra challenge of proving to themselves, their parents, and especially perhaps to the male sex, that they are capable of supporting themselves and managing their own destinies. Supervised more closely than their brothers by parents in childhood and by housemothers in college, they have yet to achieve a full sense of personal identity:

Sure I want to get married and have kids eventually. But right now I'm having too good a time going to parties, singing in operettas, and being foot-loose and fancy free. I want to prove to myself that I'm as good as the next guy before I settle down to marrying him.

The feeling that marriage is attractive arises after people have drunk deeply of the "heady wine" of freedom, have found it good, but are ready now for something more nourishing.

#### EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The dividing line between emotional immaturity and emotional disturbance is a fine one, but it is worth drawing. Maturity normally comes with age. When it doesn't, the individual may be permanently disqualified from marriage unless he gets help with his problems.

The human personality is so complex that emotional problems take many forms. Among the signs of emotional maladjustment are moodiness, anxiety, insecurity, and suspiciousness. Every person has these feelings occasionally. But when they are constantly present and strongly felt, they disrupt interpersonal relations. They may plague the individual with imaginary difficulties. The jealous suitor whose girl actually is devoted to him is a typical example of emotional aberrations:

Clyde has done a funny thing this winter. He's a good dancer and we used to go to all the big dances and have a lot of fun. But lately I can't get him to take me any more. He mentions something about being afraid the other fellows will steal me away from him and suggests we go to the movies instead.

Marriage to such a man would be a nightmare of harassment: Who came to the door today? Who was that on the phone? Why did you talk to that man at the party?

Most often emotional problems bear the trademarks of immaturity: possessiveness, irresponsibility, and unpredictability. Occasionally, however, they take the opposite form—what might be called “overmaturity” or excessive conscience development. An oversocialized person may be unable to tolerate the frailties of others:

I don't think Janie realizes how often she criticizes me. She couldn't understand why I ran out of money last semester and accused me of being irresponsible and lacking in foresight. She tells me I don't study hard enough and could get better grades if I only wanted to. After we've been to a party she tells me all the things I did wrong.

Perfectionism may be applied not only to the partner but also to the self, producing a kind of masochistic overaltruism. Though an excellent giver, such a person may be unable to accept love because his superego is so anxious not to be considered selfish. Emotional problems can usually be traced back to the parent-child relationship. Where that relationship is twisted and tense, the child learns negative reactions which are often transferred subsequently from parent to spouse:

When I go home I get a tight feeling in my abdomen because of the way my mother harangues me. She infuriates me so much that I just have to get up and leave the table. I'm afraid that when I get married I'll be oversensitive to my wife and react the same way if she ever is even the least bit critical of me.

*Desensitization.* Because emotional maladjustment can wreak havoc in marriage, such persons are not ready for marriage. Should they therefore be written off as “unmarriageable”?

There *are* some people whose problems are so difficult that no amount of help is enough. For many more however change is possible. In contrast to emotional immaturity, emotional problems are not likely to diminish with the passage of time. Nor are they often accessible to self-help through self-analysis. Insofar as one's emotional response system is out of kilter, the services of a skillful counselor are required. Fortunately, many colleges offer such services to their students and many communities to their citizens. In any case it is an indispensable part of marriage preparation for those who have such problems.

## ROLE PREPARATION

Most people learn how to be good husbands and wives automatically. In the process of growing up they learn what it means to be a husband by observing their father, or to be a wife by seeing their mother.

If parents set a good example, this aspect of readiness can be taken for granted. When they do not, children grow up deficient in their preparation for marriage roles. Whatever faults the parents have tend to haunt the next generation. Either the old patterns are followed blindly into tragic repetition of parental troubles or they are desperately rejected leaving a strained clumsiness in that area of marriage:

Chad's father is from the old country and he still has a lot of old-country ideas about husband-wife relations. He has pretty bad temper tantrums every once in a while during which he beats his wife and once he even threatened her with a gun. I never realized it before but, you know, Chad really treats me pretty much the same way. When he shoves me around and gets mad at me for having my own ideas it's just like his father and mother all over again.

In the previous case the son followed unconsciously in his father's footsteps. In other cases the child rejects the unhappy example of his parents. But he lacks intimate knowledge of a better model. Moreover, he is apt to lean over backwards in his anxiety to avoid his parents' mistakes. It is possible to try too hard in marriage—to feel so anxious about the parents' trouble spots that one overreacts to problems. Events that would cause only minor irritation in an ordinary marriage may plunge another into terror and despair by recalling the dreaded foibles of the older generation:

All I did was take a little nip at the office party, but she really told me off when we got home. She said I was so tipsy I made a fool of myself with the stenographers. Well, it just wasn't so. I was only enjoying the spirit of the occasion. Just because her old man was a drunkard and a philanderer doesn't mean I'm going to turn into one!

A person whose parents were unhappy thus lacks perspective in sensitive areas. His overeagerness to avoid his parents' difficulties boomerangs. His very attempt to prevent difficulty causes trouble:

Unfortunately, my mother-in-law had an affair with a roomer and my husband has never been able to forget it. He seems to have lost faith in women as a result and is afraid I'll go off and leave him for someone else. To prevent that he keeps me home all the time except when he can go out with me. It's begun to get on my nerves so much that if he keeps on chaperoning me he'll drive me away himself.

The very fate this husband wants to avoid he is unwittingly bringing on himself.

The reactions illustrated by these cases explain why research studies

find that children from unhappy homes are poor marriage risks. A vicious cycle transmits conflict and divorce from generation to generation.

*Remodeling for Marriage.* Does the fact that children from unhappy homes have poor models of husband-wife relationships mean they should never get married? No more in general than emotionally immature or maladjusted individuals should not. They are unready at present but not necessarily permanently.

What can be done to overcome this handicap? Two objectives need to be attained: to break the spell of the parental model; and to provide a substitute model.

Anyone who reacts against his parents' example is apt to think he has broken away from their influence. However, rebellion itself is a 'sign of continuing concern. To replace unconscious identification with the parents' behavior or apprehensive rejection of it, insight into both parents and self is needed. I need to understand why my parents behaved as they did and how their actions influenced me. Insight into my reactions and my fears and desires for my own marriage will make it possible for me to marry with greater equanimity and confidence. Insight makes possible accepting the residual sensitivity and may even produce a sense of humor about inherited trouble spots. Premarital counseling provides the best setting for talking out these bitter memories and fearful anticipations.

To break the spell of the past, however, only leaves a vacuum. A new marriage model is needed. Reading and study may help. Better yet is the opportunity to observe and participate in a smooth-running family:

My folks had so much trouble getting along that it was no fun going home to hear them quarrel. Ever since Edie and I have been going together I've spent most of my vacations at her house and it's been a real eye-opener for me. Her Mother and Dad are really wonderful people—friendly, easy-going—everything my parents aren't. They've just taken me in as practically a member of the family. I know it's been good for me to be able to live for a while in a house where the air isn't blue all the time.

For other people it may not be prospective in-laws but their own married friends who provide the desired example. Inspiring movies, novels, and biographies may fill the gap. Such alternative models help erase the memory of trouble at home. In such ways handicapped persons can make the extra preparations needed to get ready to take on the role of husband or wife.

## Circumstantial Readiness

External circumstances are less important than the personal readiness we have been discussing. Couples can undergo almost any kind of

physical hardship and come out the stronger for it, *provided* they don't blame each other for it. Thus Geiger (1955) found that Russian family solidarity was increased by political persecution blamed on the government but lowered by economic inadequacy blamed on the husband.

The unforeseeable tragedies of marriage cannot, by definition, affect the decision when to marry. The relevant question is whether both partners are prepared to cope with their foreseeable problems. If hardships lie ahead, are both partners ready to tackle them as challenges to be surmounted jointly rather than as grudges to be borne against each other? When extra handicaps are assumed voluntarily by the mutual decision of both partners, they need not threaten the relationship between them.

Nevertheless, circumstances sometimes are so inauspicious that they affect the timing of the wedding. Chief among such problems are lack of money and lack of time, both of which are apt to be combined in student marriages.

#### FINANCIAL RESOURCES

What is the minimum income a couple must have to get along? The answer varies tremendously from couple to couple, depending on the standard of living desired. Some people "just couldn't survive" on less than \$10,000 a year and would rather stay single than try. For others, rock bottom is a great deal lower. Every couple has a minimum standard below which life would be too barren. Realistic budgeting (see Chapter 14) can determine what that minimum is.

Almost nobody starts out at the level of living his parents have achieved. Except when upward mobility is unusually fast, the husband's first pay check is drastically lower than either his or her father's. Consequently both partners usually suffer cuts in their standard of living.

The fact that both slump similarly is the saving grace of the situation. If eating hamburger and making do with orange crates and secondhand furniture in a one-room apartment is an equal comedown for husband and wife, neither is likely to feel bitter. In fact dollar-stretching can be an exciting challenge.

A generation or two ago men were supposed to have money in the bank to demonstrate their readiness for marriage. Today couples are more apt to gauge their resources in current income potential. Moreover, with the trend to both partners working, total family income may be higher initially than it will be again for many years. However, dual incomes depend on desire and skill in postponing conception. Sooner or later the financial resources of the husband alone are tested by the wife's retirement coincident with the addition of extra dependents.

What if, one way or another, the couple's own resources are not ade-

quate for marriage? Does this mean they are categorically unready, or is it legitimate for parents to help them get started?

*Parental Subsidy.* To some young people accepting help from parents is unthinkable. It sacrifices bitterly won independence or threatens their precarious masculinity. For young people sure of their own abilities, however, aid from the older generation does not create anxiety:

In our family there is a regular tradition of helping each new generation get started in marriage. The old folks are glad to do it because they don't need the money themselves. The young couple aren't supposed to repay the parents but are expected to pass the money on to their own children when they get ready to be married. This way each generation gets the help when they need it the most.

From a financial point of view this policy has much to be said for it. Middle-class incomes do not reach their peak until middle age. When a man is in his twenties and thirties, his income is low but his child-rearing and house-buying expenses are high. The result is heavy pressure on the budget. At the same time his father's earning power has reached its peak while his expenses have dropped with the launching of his children and completion of his mortgage payments. The senior family experiences a financial surplus at precisely the time when the junior family has its shortage. What could be more sensible than for the older family to help out under these circumstances?

In actual practice many middle-class parents do help their children in this fashion. Sussman (1953a) found that more than three-fourths of his New Haven families gave regular financial help and service to their married children. The following is a typical parent's attitude:

At today's prices and costs of housing you can't expect children who have just finished school to be able to build or buy a house or even live decently in an apartment without help from the family. It might have been all right in my day to say, "You are twenty-one, you are on your own." Today it is different. Our feeling is that we have enough money now that we really don't need, and after all, our desires are very few at our age. So why not help the children?

Parents can be diplomatic about the way help is proffered. Substantial wedding gifts like a home, an automobile, or a check are more socially acceptable than a regular stipend. Christmas and birthdays provide repeated opportunities for presents. Sussman found that help that meets genuine needs doesn't create friction between the generations.

Only where the parent-child relationship has been chronically tense is difficulty likely to arise. Under normal circumstances parental aid provides a workable alternative to postponing an otherwise impecunious marriage.

## RESOURCES OF TIME

The next chapter spells out the planning processes necessary in preparing for the wedding, honeymoon, and first year of marriage. To rush through these would mean going into marriage half-planned, risking miscalculations which might get things off to a bad start, and harassing what should be one of the most delightful periods of anticipation in a lifetime. So a generous allotment of months is required to pave the way properly to the wedding day.

After the wedding comes the honeymoon—another feature time-pressed couples are tempted to omit or defer. The values gained by devoting a week or more to this activity are presented in Chapter 8.

The issue for this chapter is time for living together during the first year after marriage. If a couple know they would be separated soon after the wedding, should they postpone it until a more auspicious time? The answer depends both on the length of the separation and the length of the interval between the wedding and the date of departure. Nevertheless, separations of any appreciable length create problems that strain the resiliency of fragile new marriages.

*Differential Socialization During Separation.* Both partners change somewhat while they are apart. This is not due to the separation alone, for personality changes go on constantly. When people are together, however, changes are adjusted to as they occur. New interests and behavior patterns emerge so gradually that people who see each other regularly hardly realize what is happening. If the same people had been apart, the cumulative effect of the same changes would be conspicuous. Note how parents are never so startled by their children's growth as relatives who haven't seen them for a whole year.

Personality changes not only pile up during separation but also are accentuated by it. When people are together they are exposed to similar influences. Separation inevitably involves a different environment. In the case of military service, this change is especially marked:

When I was drafted into the Army, I began an entirely new phase of my relationships and views of the opposite sex. Broadmindedness was the only asset I acquired in regard to women due to the service. I found that the average serviceman was interested in one main object in women—sex. After getting out of basic training, I was transformed by my environment from a "good little boy" to one of their kind which consisted of wine, women, and sex. In the service I learned through actual experience about the "good" girls and the "bad" girls. To the common serviceman the latter were preferred. In my wandering from Chicago to Germany, Hawaii, and Japan, I acquired a knowledge of "worldly" women. I met many women in the service, but maybe because I was a soldier I didn't meet many "nice" ones. By the time I returned to America I had obtained a disgust for womanhood.

No matter what aspects of personality are involved, changes are likely to result from the contrasting experiences of the separated partners. The greater the contrast, the more they will grow apart in philosophy of life, personal habits, recreational interests, or emotional maturity. The shock effect of these changes can be reduced and the nature of pending readjustments anticipated by adequate communication. The principal vehicle for this must be correspondence.

Letters are a sad substitute for face-to-face conversations, yet they can do much to convey emerging aspirations and interests, disillusionments and problems. Reluctance to communicate these changes may stem from fear that they will be misunderstood, that their meaning may not be conveyed adequately. The inevitable slowness of question and answer in letter-writing is nerve-racking. But misunderstandings which arise can be clarified in later letters. The long-run interests of any couple are best served by frankness.

*Maintaining a Separated Relationship.* Chapter 4 lists interaction as one of the conditions of love. Conversely, separation tends to destroy love by preventing interaction. The longer the separation, the more the relationship atrophies. The weaker the relationship in the first place, the less its ability to survive the desiccating effect of a dearth of contact.

The net result is that separation is a major cause of severed relationships (Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 275). Even couples who avoid new involvements tend to find their rapport dwindling and their divergences growing. However, new involvements are probably the greatest threat to separated relationships. The greater the frequency of interaction with new partners, the greater the likelihood a new romance will supersede the old. Even the commitment of engagement or marriage is likely to be revoked if new relationships are allowed to develop. Only a timely interruption of a college separation salvaged the following relationship from disaster:

When I saw Sunny again during vacation I realized that my doubts about her had been due to the fact that she wasn't with me at college. Last Fall I had a strong need for feminine companionship and felt a considerable tug in the direction of a girl in my Poli Sci class. Although I was attracted to her, I felt guilty when I dated her because I was engaged. I'm glad now to discover that Sunny really is the one for me after all.

Separation after marriage is less apt to terminate the entire relationship. But if it comes during the early months, it disrupts a crucial period of adjustment. If the adjustment process is interrupted before satisfactory performance levels have been achieved, each partner may worry about the durability of the half-built marriage:

Max and I only had two weeks together before he was shipped out. In general we had a grand time but not sexually. I hadn't been able to get prepared through premarital medical treatments with the result that sexual re-



lations weren't satisfactory for either of us. I feel very guilty about not having been able to fulfill my marriage vows to Max in this way and I'm afraid that he resents it.

My general recommendation from this reasoning is that marriages are best timed when they allow both advance preparation and a solid year of postwedding interaction before any extensive separation. If this much time is not available before a prospective separation, it seems to me the marriage is best deferred until afterwards.

*Adjustment to Reunion.* The inevitability of change during separation necessitates a readjustment process on return. Although the average couple seldom think of reunion as a crisis, Hill (1949) has found that it would be better if they did.

When couples recognize in advance that differences are normal, they will be less disturbed. If they approach reunion determined to work out a new relationship with this partial stranger, they are more apt to succeed. For married couples a second honeymoon provides a good opportunity for getting reacquainted. Taking another honeymoon dramatizes the fact that married life is not just taking up where it left off but making a new start.

Even if no observable divergences arise between the partners, it must be recognized that the relationship is inevitably weakened by the diminished intensity of interaction. Married or not, to some extent the courtship process must begin all over again. Even though it is likely to be telescoped this time, trust and a feeling of intimacy must be rebuilt. Since the time necessary for rekindling love cannot be predicted in advance, separated couples should leave their relationships open-ended rather than predetermine their wedding date during a separation hiatus. Better to leave that crucial date to be set when they feel psychologically ready for it than to ration too meagerly their time resources at the conclusion of a long separation.

#### STUDENT MARRIAGES

In a sense, student marriages present few problems other than those already discussed. Students by definition lack financial resources. Although they are not separated, they are often severely limited in the time they can devote to one another. New, however, is the threat to their educational plans presented by marriage, especially for the girl.

These problems impinge most heavily on marriages between undergraduates, so that will be the main focus of our discussion.

*Financing Student Marriages.* A 1959-60 study of a national sample of families showed that the average student spent \$1,500 on college expenses, of which 61 per cent came from parents, 23 per cent from his own earnings, 8 per cent from scholarships, and 8 per cent from other

sources (Lansing, 1960: 22). How are such costs and resources altered when students marry?

Since two can live together as cheaply as two alone, marriage normally affects expenses relatively little (as long as they are only two!). As for resources, the chief question is whether parents should continue to subsidize their children after marriage. We have already described the widespread practice of subsidizing nonstudent families. In the case of student marriages some parents feel even more strongly that assistance is desirable since they are concerned to see their children's training completed. Especially money saved up in advance is thought of as "belonging" to the child for college purposes, regardless of whether he happens to be married or not. For this reason parents of both partners may continue to pay for tuition and other school expenses after marriage.

**Table 6-1—Distribution of Financial Support for Married Students, by Role of Wife**

Source of Income	Role of Wife				Total
	NONSTUDENT		STUDENT		
	Childless	Mother	Childless	Mother	
Husband's current earnings	11%	35%	27%	29%	23%
Wife's current earnings	62	15	19	7	35
Couple's savings	4	13	8	15	8
Parental subsidy	3	7	24	28	10
Scholarships ("G.I. Bill")	17	20	13	19	17
Miscellaneous	2	12	8	0	6
Total income	99%	102%	99%	98%	99%
No. of couples	84	66	35	11	196

Source: Unpublished study under the author's direction by Rex Richards and Barry Stulberg of married students at the University of Michigan, 1955-56. Two-thirds of the husbands involved are graduate students. Percentages shown are the proportion of total income for the group derived from the particular source. Most couples relied on more than one source.

However, Table 6-1 shows that in actual practice, married students receive far less parental subsidy than the single students reported above. Much of the difference results from the fact that married students are not a typical cross section of the student body. They are comparatively older and more advanced in their studies. Hence they are normally more self-sufficient than the typical undergraduate. Nevertheless, even where both partners are attending school, parental contributions provide less than half the normal amount of support.

The lack of parental support is made up primarily by the current earnings of the couple themselves (though a greater than usual proportion of students in the Michigan study were being subsidized by the "G.I. Bill" federal scholarship program). A common pattern is for the wife to support the husband's education. Under such circumstances mar-

riage may be a net financial gain to the husband, enabling him to complete his education faster than if he were self-supporting. However, if he acquires a student wife or especially if the couple have children, he usually has to work harder than before.

In general, therefore, financing a student marriage imposes extra burdens unless the wife has already completed her education and the couple postpone the advent of children longer than usual. The other exception is unless the parents continue to finance their children's education after marriage—but this is not the general practice in student marriages.

*Scheduling Multiple Responsibilities.* If neither partner works full time, marriage may be no more time-consuming than single life. In fact it may be less so. The extra time required to cook one's own meals is sometimes more than offset by not having to date each other any more.

But if either partner combines work and study, the pressure on time is obvious. Something has to give. At Michigan State University in 1946-47 it was not studying or sleep but recreation that was cut (Thorpe, 1951).

Social life is cut not only because of time pressure but also because campus activities are organized for single students. Marriage involves shifting from mass campus social affairs to more informal and intimate activities. For individuals who are socially mature, this comes as no great shock. For the immature, and perhaps especially for the stay-at-home wife of a hard-working student, the slash in recreation can be painful:

My wife isn't romantically involved with anyone else but she keeps wanting to step out with anyone she can pick up because she says it's too boring here at home. She seems to have decided she just doesn't want to be tied down any more. She likes to dance and I don't, but anyway I just have to stay home nights and study.

Few student marriages deteriorate so much, but this case illustrates the point that college marriages tend to be more restricted recreationally than other marriages or than single students.

Another consequence of the time shortage is pressure for sharing the housework. If both partners are going to school, the husband has a moral obligation to help out with the housekeeping and babysitting. On the other hand, if only the husband is a student, the average wife tries extra hard to protect his study time from household burdens (Christopherson, *et al.*, 1960).

Given the multiple demands of studying plus working plus keeping house, time is such a precious commodity for married students that it needs to be rationed carefully. A regular schedule of daily and weekly routines guarantees that this resource is allocated to the crucial activities:

We have a very strict schedule in which every five minutes of our day is utilized to the utmost. We have a full schedule of classes from 8:00 to 12:00 and work from 1:00 until about 6:00. Then we hurry home, hurry through dinner and dishes, and go straight to studying until about 11:00 every night. Saturday is spent doing housework and washing and ironing. We work together on everything. About every other Saturday night we take off from our studies if we see we can both afford to, and we relax. Sunday mornings are spent at church. Sunday afternoons we try to spend about an hour visiting one of our families and the remaining time we study. Our matched schedule leaves a lot of time when we are both working together and can talk. Even though we probably work harder than any couple on this campus, we believe our marriage is the happiest one there has ever been.

If to all these responsibilities, the additional task of caring for children is added, full-time education becomes well-nigh impossible. Under such circumstances, the wife's college career is usually impeded if not terminated altogether. Moreover, the wife's difficulty in continuing work once she has a child increases the husband's financial responsibility. Hence, young fathers are less apt to be able to go to school full time than are childless married students. (In the Richards-Stulberg study, only 52 per cent of the graduate-student fathers were going to school full time compared to 79 per cent of the childless graduate students.)

Foreseeing such complexities, most married students hope to postpone child-bearing until after graduation or until the latter part of graduate study. Conversely, students who do not believe in contraception shy away from marrying in college. But belief in contraception is not enough to guarantee success in practice. A high proportion of children actually born to married students are unplanned. (At Michigan State University nearly two-thirds of all the babies born to married students were unplanned, according to a study by Landis, Poffenberger and Poffenberger in 1949.) Unexpected children are therefore one of the major hazards facing college marriages.

*Protecting Educational Goals.* We have already described children as a threat to the college career of both husband and wife. If students were able to avoid having children, how would marriage as such affect the attainment of the higher education so important to their future lives and to society at large?

Numerous studies show that married students' grades are at least as high as those of single students (for example, Hunter, 1959). However, these studies fail to report how often marriage disrupts education completely. It seems likely that a substantial proportion of women drop out of college after getting married. Unknown is the proportion of men who fail to finish their education because they "temporarily" drop out to support a young family, never to return.

The fact that married students who manage to stay in college do well in their studies shows that college and marriage are not inevitably

incompatible. However, the over-all conclusion from this discussion would seem to be that educational goals can be protected only under the following conditions: (a) parental subsidy or similar outside financial assistance; (b) postponement of childbearing; and (c) postponement of marriage itself until the wife at least is substantially finished with her education.

## Deciding When to Get Married

A rational decision about when to get married is a complicated affair. Timing for college students is restricted by the difficulties of getting married in midterm. The month of June, the rest of the summer, Christmas, and between semesters are the chief periods when honeymoons are possible. After graduation the groom's vacation from his job is a determining factor.

Most of the issues involved are long-range ones. Becoming socially and emotionally mature are gradual processes which don't change much from month to month but do change over longer stretches of time. Such considerations help decide whether this year or next is the right time to get married.

Usually the wedding date is agreed on by the couple after mutual discussion, though one partner may be more eager than the other. The final decision should be voluntary, since force—whether in the form of a persuasive tongue or a shotgun—produces an uncooperative spouse. Eager as one partner may be, it is better to give the other plenty of time to make up his mind that he is ready for marriage.

Though far less crucial than choosing the right person, deciding when to marry is the major sign that an engagement is in order.

# *Rites of Passage:*

## *I. Engagement*

In most primitive societies elaborate ceremonies mark the transition between one stage of life and the next. Especially when successive statuses involve more responsibility, rites of passage emphasize the seriousness of the change. The most elaborate initiation ceremonies are puberty rites for adolescent boys which denote the assumption of the adult male role on which the economic and military survival of the society depend. Closely analogous in significance are the social rituals that signal the individual's entrance into the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood.

Rites of passage are not limited to primitive societies, even though they may be less elaborate, less painful, and less conspicuous amid the complexities of modern life. In any society ritualization of the transition from single youthfulness to married adulthood adds strength and stability to the institution of marriage.

The wedding ceremony is the central feature of modern initiation rites. However, the preceding engagement period and the following honeymoon trip also are ritualized elements in celebrating the transition.

### Engagement as a Ritualized Transition

The engagement period lasts so long that we rarely think of it as a ceremony. However, the girl's ring on her finger, picture in the paper,

and round of showers merit the use of the term even though the male partner is marginal to the process. (Getting married is the crucial transition in life for women whereas for men it has to compete with occupational changes for central importance.)

#### THE ENGAGEMENT RING

The custom of wearing an engagement ring is nearly always observed in the United States. [In New Haven, only 6 per cent of all engaged women fail to get one (Hollingshead, 1952).] Usually too the traditional diamond is the stone chosen (at a cost of hundreds of dollars). For ceremonial purposes any kind of ring on the third finger, left hand will do. If a diamond is beyond the man's resources or the couple place ceremonial expenditures low in their scale of values, an inexpensive substitute can function just as well psychologically and socially. However, no ring at all leaves the girl feeling only half-engaged. While she herself knows perfectly well that marriage is impending, she lacks the public symbol that she is in midpassage.

#### THE NEWSPAPER ANNOUNCEMENT

Less universal than engagement rings, because highly stratified especially in large cities, is announcing the engagement in the local newspaper. Although the initiative comes from the girl and her family, the final determination of what will be published is often in the hands of the society page editor. When such news does appear in print, it further ceremonializes the engagement process.

#### PARTIES AND SHOWERS

Even less standardized are the customs governing group celebrations of the engagement. In some segments of society they include teas or cocktail parties to introduce the prospect to the partner's social set. On college campuses fraternity and sorority serenades to pinned and engaged couples celebrate the social importance of the step forward. As the wedding draws closer, the bride's friends shower her with household goods whose practical value may be considerable but whose chief sociological meaning is to mark her impending exodus into the world of married women. The excitement of these occasions reinforces her awareness that she is about to say farewell to childhood and become a true adult.

### Transitional Timing

If engagement is a period of transition, it follows logically that it should not last indefinitely. Hence, couples should not get engaged until

closer. Broken engagements are therefore to be expected in a certain proportion of cases. They are inevitably embarrassing to all concerned because engagement itself is so public. Yet the complications are mild compared to divorce. One virtue of our engagement system is that it provides for commitment that is not irrevocable. It is an opportunity to see what it feels like to be almost married but not quite—partly committed but not completely. It's the last chance to pretest the marriage.

### PLANNING FOR MARRIAGE

Although there is nothing to prevent couples from talking about marriage beforehand, the engagement sets the wheels of planning turning at full speed. Plans must be made not only for the wedding and honeymoon but also for the first year of marriage.

*Planning the Wedding.* Arranging for the wedding ceremony and its associated festivities is an elaborate process in itself. If the girl is away at school, communicating with her mother by correspondence is painfully slow. If the man and his family are interested, the negotiations get even more complex. Fortunate are those couples who begin their planning months in advance. Organizing and administering a wedding is hectic enough without trying to make all the decisions at the last minute.

Setting the date for the wedding requires balancing many factors. The ideal date not only allows the partners ample preparation time and honeymoon time. It quite practically computes the bride's menstrual cycle and seeks to avoid interference with the sexual side of the honeymoon (difficult as such predictions are with all the tensions of the wedding period). It also enables relatives and friends to attend conveniently. And it signs up the desired clergyman, caterer, and physical facilities for the wedding and reception (often months in advance for the crowded June calendar). Booking the honeymoon may take less advance notice but still must be planned.

*Professional Preparation for Marriage.* Most states require a blood test for syphilis before issuing a marriage license. An increasing number of couples use their doctor's professional skill far more comprehensively to help them get ready for marriage.

This is a good time for a complete physical examination designed to detect physical conditions that could be remedied by medical or surgical treatment. For the first time in life the reproductive system assumes special importance. Many kinds of anatomical and physiological irregularities may be discovered. Fortunately, most defects lend themselves to remedial measures. In those few cases where the doctor determines that a couple could never have children, stock-taking is inevitable. Some couples decide to go ahead with marriage, hoping to adopt children or



willing to risk missing the experience of child-rearing for the sake of their love for each other. Other couples part regretfully. This is especially likely when the man is the sterile partner and the woman has anticipated the day when she would bear children of her own. Men too may legitimately feel they want children who are "flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone." In any case, having the information before marriage helps couples know what they are getting in for.

Medical preparation for sexual intercourse often includes dilating the vaginal opening (either by the doctor or by the girl herself following the doctor's instructions). Dr. Lovett Dewees reports (1947: 59) that only 10 per cent of his patients had hymens elastic enough to make honeymoon intercourse comfortable without prior dilation.

For couples who intend to use contraceptives, engagement is the time to secure instructions and materials from the physician or Planned Parenthood Clinic.

Some doctors are able to counsel the bride and groom about the sexual side of marriage. Couples who desire such preparation should choose one who is competent in this field.

Just as doctors recommend premarital medical treatment, so more and more clergymen provide premarital counseling. A few even refuse to marry anyone who has not been instructed in marriage, and most clergymen are happy to provide such guidance to those who request it.

The methods used vary from didactic courses of instruction to non-directive personal counseling. Interest usually focuses on the spiritual aspects of marriage, but this may be very broadly defined. Some clergymen are qualified to deal with all aspects of marriage. For young people who take their religion seriously, a pastoral consultation about marriage itself and not just the details of the wedding is a resource worth utilizing during the engagement period.

*Planning for Married Living.* As soon as the honeymoon is over, the newlyweds settle into a new way of life. In earlier generations much of this life was left up to chance or entered on faith, but most couples now take advantage of the engagement period to plan their life together.

The trend has been to make more plans ahead of time. Typical topics of engagement conversation include handling money in marriage, having children, where to live, religion, the wife working, and the husband's occupation. Koller (1951) found that over the past three generations the number of engaged couples who never discuss any of these issues has dropped from one-fourth practically to zero, whereas the number who talk over all of them has risen from 5 per cent to 50 per cent.

In the financial area not only discussing how to handle the money but also preparing a detailed budget for the first year of marriage is advisable. Agreement will also need to be reached on whether to practice birth control (for those who have doubts). Setting up housekeeping involves

finding a place to live and choosing patterns for silver, china, and perhaps furniture as well.

Planning ahead is not only an important engagement task but also enjoyable too. Like the excitement of planning a round-the-world cruise, half the fun of being engaged is anticipating the new experiences ahead.

## Interaction during Engagement

The imminence of marriage is normally welcomed but occasionally raises doubt about the wisdom of the fateful step ahead and almost always raises new issues to be settled.

*Doubt.* How much doubt is normal during engagement? If doubts arise, do they mean the engagement should be broken?

Hesitation about marrying the fiancé(e) often occurs early in courtship. But most of it is resolved before people actually get engaged. Only one-fifth of the Burgess-Wallin men and women ever wished they had not become engaged or considered breaking the engagement (1953: 181). Presumably this 20 per cent includes many of those (15 per cent of the total) who subsequently broke their engagement. Though transitory qualms may be fairly common among couples who go on to get married, serious doubts often foreshadow the end of the relationship and deserve careful examination.

There are exceptions, however, to this general rule. Doubts don't necessarily lead to breaking up nor do those who marry despite them necessarily have trouble. Indeed communication of doubts to the partner may actually strengthen the relationship:

When I told Morrie how my feelings go up and down like a roller coaster, I felt better toward him immediately. He confessed there had been a few days when he had wondered about our engagement too. All in all he was very sympathetic and seems to be very much in love with me, so I feel more strongly about him than before.

*Conflicts.* Though couples who can't get along with each other gradually get weeded out during courtship, engagements are not immune to conflict. In fact the Burgess-Wallin couples typically disagreed about several different areas. The biggest sources of disagreement were ways of dealing with families, how to dress and act in public, and personal friendships (1953: 246-247). Among Indiana University couples disagreements centered about neatness, in-laws, and economic roles (Kirkpatrick and Hobart, 1954).

These areas of conflict reflect the special nature of engagement. Couples close to marriage seldom quarrel any more about such familiar matters as dating (the *rarest* source of conflict in the Burgess-Wallin

study). Rather, they have trouble over their external social relations with family and friends, their public appearance as a committed couple, and the economic roles that will support their impending marriage. These are areas that could have been explored before engagement but that engagement brings to the fore with new vehemence.

Some disagreement between any two people—no matter how well suited—is inevitable. The crucial question is not whether a couple have disagreements or even how many they have so much as how well they resolve them.

*Deepened Relationships.* Doubts afflict few engaged couples and conflicts, though widespread, are seldom chronic. The overwhelming feeling characteristic of engaged couples is not anxiety but euphoria and elation. Shorn of the insecurity of uncommitted dating and excited by the imminence of the marital adventure, they experience a peak intensity of love and deepened intimacy of relationship. As the wedding day approaches, the momentum of courtship accelerates into a flood of festivities crowning the remaining days of not-quite-marriedness.

# *Rites of Passage:*

## *II. Wedding and Honeymoon*

If engagement is properly labeled a "rite of passage," the wedding and honeymoon are unquestionably so. The sociological rationale presented in the last chapter applies with equal force here. All three elements in the transition to marriage strengthen it as a social institution. The more ritualized the ceremonies, the sharper the realization of the significance of the step.

The great event toward which courtship points is the wedding ceremony. This is the culmination of careful planning, the fulfillment of childhood dreams, the high point in many a girl's life (rivaled chiefly by the time she gives birth to her first child). Though handicapped by the American tradition of masculine unemotionalism, the groom, too, often finds his wedding day deeply significant.

### Members of the Wedding

Who cares whether a couple get married? Who is the wedding for—the bride and groom, the parents, or the spectators? When there are conflicts between these groups, how can they be reconciled?

*The Couple.* The most important participants are the bride and groom. This may seem too trite to be worth saying, yet their wishes and feelings sometimes get lost in the shuffle. Few figures are more pathetic

than the bride whose parents run away with the wedding. This debacle usually reflects dominating personalities or social ambitions in the parents. Exploiting the wedding to serve parental needs is facilitated by the fact that the bride's parents traditionally pay the wedding expenses:

I'm very much afraid my father is going to dominate the wedding plans. He's already begun talking enthusiastically about his favorite processional music (which I detest) and he even wants us to hire someone to sing that awful "Oh Promise Me." He seems to think that since he's going to pay for the wedding he can buy just the kind he wants. Sometimes I feel so disappointed I'd rather junk the whole church wedding, but I'll probably make the best of the situation when the time comes.

Resentment at being left out of wedding plans is a natural reaction for the bride and groom. Sometimes it tempts them to elope, running away to be married in a strange community, bereft of family and friends.

Elopement is always a deviant solution to a difficult situation. Like the child who runs away from home, an eloping couple signifies that something has gone wrong with the parent-child relationship. Sometimes the problem is that the parents oppose the marriage as such. If their judgment is sound, they can hardly be blamed for causing the secret wedding.

If the parents do not oppose the marriage but drive the couple to desperation by disregarding their wedding preferences, elopement signifies that the balance of planning between the members of the wedding was faulty.

For the young couple the ceremony marks the beginning of a new way of life. Marriage and parenthood both hinge on this event. The consequences of the wedding are so far-reaching that their desires deserve top priority in planning.

Traditionally, the bride is in the middle of wedding preparations while the groom remains on the periphery, the butt of jokes about being trapped by the female apparatus and of teasing about failing to show up at the church. Left out of the planning, he understandably feels frustrated, helpless, the victim of circumstances beyond his control.

Such contrasting involvement reflects the greater change marriage produces in the status of women. Yet with the modern shift toward cooperative husband-wife relationships, some grooms are as interested in the wedding as their brides. So, traditions aside, they share in planning the joint occasion. Presumably, the more actively an individual participates in the planning process, the more meaningful the occasion becomes to him.

*The Parents.* Although the wedding makes a tremendous difference in the lives of the couple, it marks a turning point for parents as well. When their first child is married, the wedding ends the child-rearing stage and begins the "launching" phase in the cycle of family living. With their last child the launching process is completed and the "empty nest" stage

begins. In-between marriages mark off another inexorable step toward old age and death.

For most parents a son's or daughter's marriage is a kind of bereavement. There is joy of course in the child's happiness. But when he leaves home forever, a void is left behind. Going away to college or work paves the way for this bereavement, but still the family ties are unbroken. Home still is the place to go in time of trouble and during vacations. At marriage, however, the child shifts his loyalty, his dependence, and his home base. As a result, life never looks quite the same again to the parents.

The impact of the wedding on the parents depends on their personalities. For a mother whose life for a quarter century has been wrapped up in her children, the effect is drastic (as her tears bear witness). A mother longing to resume her career may feel a sense of relief in marrying off her last child. Fathers similarly may anticipate loneliness or welcome the chance for a "second honeymoon" and freedom to pursue adult interests. More often than not, mixed feelings occur in the same person. Almost always the parents' sense of involvement is strong in the child they've nourished, enjoyed, and worried about for twenty years or more.

The wedding is also a major social event. For socially prominent families it is worth a big splash on the society page. For middle-class families it provides an opportunity to create a distinctive impression in the right circles.

Parents differ greatly in the extent to which they care what others think of the wedding. Those who are secure in their social position may care little. Those who are socially conscious may be anxious to avoid mistakes in etiquette or ritual. The socially ambitious may treasure the opportunity to lure "the right people" into pews and reception hall. To the bride and groom such ambitions are apt to appear irrelevant and selfish. Yet feelings that mean much to the parents cannot be disregarded without offending them.

Important as wedding repercussions may be to them personally and socially, most parents are not preoccupied with their own stakes in the wedding so much as they are eager to do right by their children. They want the wedding to be attractive and memorable primarily for the sake of the bride and groom. Though the generations may differ in taste, their goals are essentially the same—a good wedding.

*Relatives and Friends.* Less directly involved but still interested are the relatives and friends of both families. Numerous, sometimes innumerable, they pile up on invitation lists at an astonishing rate. Whenever both partners come from the same community and from prolific families, the pressure of this "cloud of witnesses" on the wedding budget becomes insistent.

The friends of the bride and groom—classmates, playmates, and favorite teachers—are obvious participants. The couple may feel closer

to this circle of intimates than to their parents. From them are recruited the bridal party, the best man, and the ushers. Their presence reinforces the happiness of the occasion for the couple.

But what about the endless relatives (who otherwise gather only at funerals), the friends of the parents, and the father's business associates? Mostly members of an older generation, these people seem like excess baggage. For all of them to "horn in" on the wedding destroys its intimacy. What right have they to descend like a plague of locusts on so sacred an occasion?

Even though few of these marginal people may be well known, they nevertheless want to join in the wedding. For married couples every wedding brings back memories of their own and the ritual reinforces their vows. Since "all the world loves a lover," weddings give all but the cynic an emotional lift.

But relatives and friends of the family have more than just a vague attraction to weddings in general. They are specifically interested in the young couple as such, even if that interest isn't reciprocated. When the child of a cousin or bridge partner gets married, they'd like to see what the bride and groom look like and to share in the occasion. Being present may not be urgent for them, but they appreciate being invited—and feel left out if they are not. Because of ties of blood or friendship with the marrying families, they feel that they too deserve to be members of the wedding.

*Conflict of Interests.* With so many different people interested, it would be strange if everyone had the same idea about how things should be run. What the wider circle of friends and relatives think doesn't matter much. But two parties are especially apt to clash—the couple versus the girl's parents. They are the four people on whom the responsibility for the wedding falls most directly. Because of differences in age and in the nature of their involvement, these two couples are quite likely to differ.

The most common conflict is over the size of the wedding. From our discussion of members of the wedding, it can be seen why the younger generation often prefer to restrict the wedding to their personal acquaintances, whereas the older generation want a different set of guests. Paradoxical as it may seem, parents often want to spend more on the wedding, while the bride wants to save their money or wishes they would give it to her as a wedding present instead.

As a general rule, special weight should be given to the parties most concerned in any issue. If the details of the wedding ceremony or the membership of the bridal party are at issue, these matter most to the bride and groom. But when it comes to adding relatives and family friends to the invitation list, the parents are better judges. This means that conflicts over wedding size should normally be resolved on the large side. If parents want to spend their money, it should be their privilege. Young

people who worry lest a large congregation spoil their sense of intimacy can take comfort in realizing that they will be so wrapped up in the ceremony that they will be oblivious to the extra faces in the back seats:

Greta and I had a wonderful wedding. The weather was perfect, Father O'Brien performed the ceremony, and we were deeply moved by it. There's only one thing I would do differently if I were doing it over again. We felt that we wanted to limit the invitations to the very closest friends and relatives. So we ruthlessly crossed off the list an awful lot of people who would have liked to be there. I realize now that it really wouldn't have made any difference at the time to us and I've regretted ever since that we were so exclusive about it.

In recommending that conflicts be settled on the large side, I do not mean to advocate any particular number. As Bowman suggests (1960: 255), "A wedding, like a garment, should fit. . . . As is true of a garment, there is no point in having the largest one possible." A fitting size reflects the number of relatives of both families and friends of both generations who are geographically accessible (within the limits of space and budget available).

Successful conflict-resolution clears the way to arrangements that meet the needs of the interested parties. With family feuds avoided, the spirit of the wedding can be appropriately solemn and the reception appropriately joyous.

## The Wedding Ceremony

Solemnity befits the seriousness of the life-long commitment undertaken by the two partners. It is provided most naturally under religious auspices. Over 80 per cent of all New Haven weddings occur in church settings and most of the remainder are conducted by clergymen at the bride's home (Hollingshead, 1952). Religious weddings add supernatural sanctions to the solidarity of the newly established family: "What God hath joined, let no man put asunder." The church locale brings together the religious community in support of the newly formed subcommunity.

All churches provide customary rituals to govern the wedding ceremony. Although some of them allow no leeway, the "free churches" usually permit couples with particular preferences to modify the ceremony. For example, some couples prefer to speak their own vows instead of relying on the clergyman for coaching. Some alter the vows themselves, as by omitting the promise to obey from the bride's commitment. Alterations are more apt to be improvements rather than mere deletions. Lester Kirkendall's family substituted for the traditional "giving away" of the bride, the following postscript to the wedding ceremony:



Marriage brings into being a new family. This is the meaning of the ceremony you have just witnessed. But no family stands of itself alone. It exists in a fabric of other families, and draws strength from and gives support to others as it becomes a part of the community of families. The most important ties for either a new or an established family are the ones which unite those of one flesh and blood.

As a token and as acknowledgement of those ties and of their mutual interdependence, this husband and wife and their parents have expressed a wish. It is their desire to give visible expression of their purpose to support and sustain each other in the life before them.

Mr. and Mrs. ——— (the groom's parents), will you take a place by the side of your new daughter? Mr. and Mrs. ——— (the bride's parents), will you take a place by the side of your new son?

As a pledge to your intention will you unite by the joining of hands?

I now pronounce you a new family. Your unity will be established and your outreach will extend as you show each other forbearance and understanding and offer one another appreciation and solace in good times and in bad.

In order to give the congregation a sense of participation in the ceremony, there may be congregational hymn-singing, the reading of collective prayers, or opportunities for those so moved to offer a prayer or religious message. To make the ceremony most meaningful to the bride and groom their favorite music may be played on the organ or phonograph and their favorite passages read from the Bible or religious poetry. The possible variations are many, and the larger the number of significant symbols the couple can incorporate in their ceremonies, the more meaningful the occasion is for them. The rewards are rich for those who create a ceremony that expresses their ideals for their new life together:

We wish all of our friends might have been with us, for it was an experience both glad and solemn, fulfilling for both of us the dream of a ceremony beautiful with lovely simplicity and depth of feeling.

By contrast, other churches and couples prize the age-old symbols and would be uncomfortable with the slightest innovation. For them the very sameness of the rituals enhances their beauty.

All that matters is that the ceremony fits the spiritual needs of the couple, affirming their aspirations and pledging their commitment in terms that are meaningful to them.

## The Reception

The function of the reception is to provide an opportunity for each member of the wedding to congratulate the bride and groom individually by handshake or kiss. It is also a party to celebrate the wedding. And in the wedding breakfast or wedding cake it represents at least symbolically the first meal together of the couple as husband and wife.

The reception is the largest expense in most weddings. The party may be a gala affair with dancing until the early hours. Refreshments may come in costly bottles. Under such circumstances families with limited means may have to choose between limiting the guests at the reception or limiting the expenditure per person. Etiquette allows the former discrimination to be made between those invited to the wedding only and those to the reception also. However, since guests don't like to be discriminated against, it may be preferable to stretch the budget to fit the people. If people are more important than punch, the champagne can be dispensed with. True friends are not offended by simplicity and merriment does not have to be stimulated.

In New Haven most families invite everybody to the reception. (The median attrition from wedding to reception is a mere decline of eighteen from the typical 177 guests at the church according to Hollingshead's special computations for the author.)

*Wedding Finances.* In 1949-50 such weddings typically cost \$775. Table 8-1 portrays the range of variation in costs to the families involved.

**Table 8-1—Wedding Reception Costs, by Size of Wedding**

Conditions	SIZE OF WEDDING		
	Small	Average	Large
Attendants	2	6	11
Guests	Family	150	300
Reception location	Home	Church	Country Club
Costs			
Bride's family	\$188	\$761	\$3,002
Groom's family	50	183	507
Total	\$238	\$944	\$3,509

Adapted from United Press news release, July 20, 1956. Source: Study by University of Cincinnati students of Professor Margaret Jane Snyder.

Both families furnish their own clothes, the ring to be given away, and gifts and flowers (corsages or boutonnieres) for their own attendants. The bride's family normally pays for the invitations and announcements, the church expenses, and the reception. The groom's family provides flowers for the bride and both mothers and grandmothers, the marriage license, and a gift to the officiating clergyman.

Though custom discriminates against the family of the bride, the groom's family can redress the balance by more generous wedding gifts, especially of honeymoon expenses. If an impecunious girl marries a wealthy boy, the balance of wedding costs can be altered provided the delicate negotiations involved successfully avoid hurt feelings on either side.

Money spent by parents on the wedding is indirectly transferred to the bride and groom in the form of presents since the larger the wedding,

the larger the number of gifts received. Hollingshead's New Haven respondents estimated the value of gifts received at well over half the entire cost of the wedding and reception. Such gifts give the new family a head start in establishing their new household and symbolize the good wishes of friends and relatives for a prosperous married life.

## The Honeymoon

Occasional articles in popular magazines warn that the honeymoon is a dangerous practice, so exaggerated in its reputation that it is bound to be disappointing. To be sure, it is possible to expect too much from anything and thereby become disillusioned. Nevertheless, the fault lies in the expectations, not in the practice. That most people's expectations are not unattainably high is suggested by the "complete satisfaction" with their honeymoons reported by three-quarters of the women interviewed by Brav (1947).

### THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HONEYMOON

In its festive tone the honeymoon prolongs one aspect of the reception, but in its exclusiveness it marks a literal departure. Leaving the reception before it has ended, the couple embark on their own private celebration of their marriage.

*Celebration.* Were they to stay longer at the reception, the couple might prolong their celebration by a few hours. But by the morrow the remainder of the celebrants must return to work or at least will tire of celebrating some one else's wedding. One's own, however, deserves more extensive rejoicing than that. For marriages destined to continue "till death us do part," a day's observance is insufficient. So, long after the other members of the wedding resume their ordinary tasks, newlyweds postpone the taking up of such routines. This symbolizes the depth of their gratitude for one another and heightens their sense of the contrast between their earlier separateness and their new togetherness. The honeymoon in this sense is the final element in the rites of passage begun with engagement.

*Intimacy.* Unlike the preceding ceremonies, all of which were distinctively public, the honeymoon is strictly a private affair (as cartoons about mothers-in-law tagging along testify). If receptions lasted indefinitely, they could perform the celebration function admirably but for the fact that the dyad formed by marriage needs celebrating as a unit. The honeymoon provides the first chance to be alone as a married couple. With nothing else to divert their attention they can concentrate their attention on the growing awareness that they are really married at last.

Discovering what it means to be married involves a wide gamut of revelations. After all the processes of compatibility testing that have been discussed, it may seem doubtful that two people could have any more acquainting to do. Yet marriage is different from even the most intimate courtship.

No matter how long the courtship, there are hidden facets of the personality which pop up during the honeymoon. Such little things as discovering that he likes his oatmeal "practically stiff" or she requires a fantastic number of blankets to keep warm.

Then there are the new experiences of marriage to encounter: the first breakfast together (no matter how many meals have been shared before, there's a new flavor the day after the wedding); the first church service as man and wife; the first dance now that they are indissolubly linked together. Marriage and parenthood bring more new experiences with each passing year, but never are they crowded quite so intriguingly together as on the honeymoon.

Central to the intimacy function of the honeymoon is sexual intimacy. The minority who have already been completely intimate miss out on this. Indeed, lacking the anticipation of this climactic new experience, they often dispense with a honeymoon altogether (Kanin, 1958). For the rest the first intercourse is significantly labeled the "consummation" of the marriage. It completes the "joining together" proclaimed in the wedding ceremony.

Of course, it is not necessary to go off on a honeymoon trip in order to be able to have intercourse. Nevertheless, the leisureliness of a vacation from occupational duties enables honeymooners to indulge their sexual desires more freely and flexibly. For many couples the honeymoon is the peak period of sexual activity of their entire married lives. Honeymooning thus enables them to experience many forms of intimacy to the full.

#### CRITERIA FOR THE HONEYMOON

If these objectives of celebrating the marriage and enjoying new intimacies are to be achieved, what conditions must be provided?

*Privacy.* Achieving a sense of identity as a married couple requires leaving the reception and the mother-in-law behind. At first it's bad enough to have anyone around, and the couple want nothing so much as to escape what seem to be the watchful eyes of others. However, newlyweds are notoriously conspicuous for their radiance and self-consciousness. Try as they may to disguise their honeymooning, they are apt to slip up somewhere:

When we drove up to the Norwich Inn, we were determined to act so calmly and naturally that no one would know we'd just gotten married. Jan

went in first to pick up the reservations and I followed after with the suitcases. Despite my efforts to appear blasé, the guests in the lobby seemed to be looking at me and nodding their heads knowingly. While I was disconcertedly trying to figure out how they guessed our secret, Jan turned around and burst out laughing. I had perched one of her little hats on my head while unloading the trunk and it was still there!

After a day or two it is less embarrassing to be seen in public, but unselfconscious enjoyment of sexual intimacy requires ample opportunity to withdraw behind closed doors, undisturbed by callers, the telephone, or sound transmitted into or out of the room. Guaranteeing such privacy is one reason for taking a trip away from friends and relatives, leaving them miles behind. It doesn't necessarily require flight to the North woods but simply into an anonymous environment where one is not obliged to pay attention to others nor they in return.

*Vacation.* Leaving the home community is necessary to get away not only from social obligations but also from occupational ones. Even without going to work, moving into the new apartment right away is too practical to make it possible to concentrate on one another as persons.

Much as all vacations, honeymoons require a generous measure of time. Some people call a weekend a honeymoon but they would hardly call it a vacation. Most people, fortunately, manage the week or two celebrating minimally deserves. (Hollingshead reports the average New Haven honeymoon as nine days.)

But this is not just an ordinary vacation. As the only one of its kind, it deserves to be extraordinary. Whatever the couple deem most enjoyable is the logical locale. Since leisure-time tastes differ from couple to couple, appropriate locations vary accordingly. For some couples the greatest appeal is the bright lights of the city. For others nothing could be less attractive. In either case the honeymoon deserves to be as enjoyable as can be designed, given the preferences of both partners. If ever in life a vacation is to be special, this is the one.

*Budgetable.* One feature that affects the enjoyment of vacations is cost. If so much is spent on the honeymoon that the first year of marriage will be financially undermined, its attractions cannot be enjoyed to the full. Only if the cost is borne by the parents is this factor irrelevant to honeymoon enjoyment.

On the other hand, if the occasion is to be memorable, it must cost something. Fortunate but rare are couples whose friends offer cottages free of charge. For the rest the uniqueness of the honeymoon vacation makes it worth more than the usual vacation allotment.

Just how much is tolerable varies with the couple's resources. The median New Haven cost at 1950 prices was \$287 (or roughly \$30.00 a day for the average nine-day honeymoon).

*Nonpostponable.* The most absolute of honeymoon criteria is that

it must be taken immediately after the wedding. This is one of the few now-or-never situations faced in marriage. It is not absolutely necessary to take a honeymoon, but to postpone one is to turn it into a mere vacation, an ordinary instead of an extraordinary one. None of the special functions of the honeymoon can be reproduced later. Even a brief lapse of time dulls the edge of enjoyment. To celebrate a marriage and savor its intimacy, the honeymoon deserves to be taken when it is meant to be.

Usually it is (the honeymoon was skipped by only 6 per cent of Hollingshead's New Haven cross section). For married students, however, limited financial and time resources bar the way more often. Five times as many of Kanin's married students failed to take a honeymoon. Apparently, this is one of the extra sacrifices that must be chalked up to marrying prematurely before the husband is occupationally launched. Similarly, Hollingshead's individuals who had been married before felt less need to repeat (even though with a new partner) what they had been through before.

From such data the following conclusions emerge. Ideally every couple making the great transition into marriage for the first time in their lives take a honeymoon trip of at least a week's duration if they can possibly afford the time and money. The honeymoon means most to them if it represents their first experience of complete sexual intimacy, though its meaning is not altogether lost upon those who have already had intercourse together. In any case, the honeymoon is an indispensable ingredient of a full-blown celebration of the rites of passage into marriage.

There is a very dismal aura to the thought of getting married on Wednesday and going to work on Thursday. It is almost as if someone could ask you "What did you do yesterday?" and you could answer, "Oh, nothing much, I just got married!"

## *Part Two*

# MARRIAGE

Once the couple return from their honeymoon, they begin married living in earnest. The first year of marriage is an initiation period which frequently determines whether the marriage ultimately succeeds or fails (Chapter 9). Even with a good beginning every marriage faces the problem of maintaining the husband-wife relationship over the changing years (Chapter 10). Failure to initiate or maintain a good relationship often leads to divorce (and usually remarriage) in the search for marital happiness (Chapter 11).

Everyday married living requires endless decision-making (Chapter 12). Chapters 13 and 14 are concerned with the practical matters of earning and spending money and keeping the household going, Chapters 15 and 16 with the couple's external involvement in the kinship network and religious institutions, and Chapters 17 and 18 with their internal relationship in leisure generally and sexual activity in particular.





# *Initiating*

## *Marriage Roles*

This chapter is concerned with the establishment of a functioning pattern of marital role behavior, that is, with the problem of working out a reciprocal interaction pattern of husbandly and wifely behavior.

### Marriage as a System of Roles

Chapter 2 emphasized the importance of choosing a marriage partner with similar role conceptions and expectations. Marriage is a miniature social system which must be kept in equilibrium if it is not to fall apart. Equilibrium requires that the role enactments of one partner correspond to the role expectations of the other. Every expectation I have for my wife is a right I claim to some service from her. This imposes on her a corresponding obligation to fulfill my expectations of her. Rights and obligations are thus complementary (Gross, Mason, and McEachern, 1958). Since marriage is the simplest of social systems, a dyad, the implications of each partner's expectations for the other are immediately apparent. In short, the equilibration of marriage requires meshing each partner's behavior with the other's expectations.

There is yet another sense in which marriage is a social system. As a relatively independent social unit, every marriage is more or less self-sufficient. To maintain a household and manage the family finances (to

say nothing of less tangible services) requires that certain necessary tasks be performed by someone. Since there are only two members of the marital dyad, whatever functions are not performed by one partner must necessarily be done by the other, or else, again, the system breaks down. To use a very homely example, it does not matter much whether the husband or the wife carries out the garbage, but it matters a great deal that someone does it.

Chapter 2 dealt with marital roles primarily in the decision-making area, discussing the problems created when a patriarch marries an equalitarian. This problem will be treated in greater detail in the forthcoming chapter on decision-making in marriage (Chapter 12). The garbage question will be pursued in Chapter 13 on the division of labor.

Marriage as a system of complementary roles can be seen also in the differentiation between "instrumental" and "integrative" leadership roles (Parsons and Bales, 1955). Small-group research shows that task-oriented problem-solving groups develop two types of leadership which are wielded by different persons. The instrumental leader is concerned with getting things done, with pushing the group to reach its goals. The integrative leader is concerned with holding the group together despite the strains created by the instrumental leader. Group productivity and stability depend on the emergence of these two contrasting leadership roles and on the development of a cooperative working relationship between them. In this sense, the two roles are complementary, each fulfilling what the other cannot accomplish and both necessary to the continuing success of the group.

Parsons suggests that husbands tend to play the instrumental leadership role in family living and wives the integrative one. Morris Zelditch, in a comparative study of role differentiation in the nuclear family, found this hypothesis confirmed in a large number of primitive societies. To what extent leadership in American families is differentiated along these same sex lines remains to be determined, but that husbands and wives need to play differential leadership roles seems clear.

By and large, role differentiation is expected to follow sex lines; that is, our society not only says that the lawn should be mowed but says the husband should be the one to do it. The role expectations that everybody carries into marriage not only predict what the husband or wife will do but also are very much "evaluative standards applied to an incumbent of a position" (Gross, *et al.*, 1958). They are beliefs about what the spouse *ought* to do as a marriage partner of that particular sex.

Were our society completely standardized, the partners' sets of role expectations would always coincide. The fact that it is not means that no two people ever enter marriage with identical expectations, no matter how carefully they have chosen each other.

## ENACTING MARRIAGE ROLES

Before marriage the subject of marriage roles is largely theoretical. The acid test of role compatibility comes in the first year of marriage. Then the limits of premarital interaction are removed and husband and wife begin acting out their roles in full.

*Preconceptions of Role Behavior.* Each partner wants to be a good husband or wife and begins behaving as his preconceptions lead him to believe is right. Few of these conceptions are conscious since they are largely the residue of childhood experience with the parental model. When the role behavior of husband and wife turns out to be complementary, it commands no attention and hence no awareness:

This automatic function of role systems has significance for psychological economy of effort. The person is spared the necessity of coming to decisions about most of the acts he performs because he knows his parts so well . . . as long as complementarity is maintained at high levels of equilibrium, decisions are decentralized, so to speak. They are taken care of by the system of role relations rather than by the person's acting in a self-conscious manner. (Spiegel, 1957.)

Except for unusually incompatible couples the bulk of marriage-role behavior functions in this automatic fashion.

Nevertheless, over half the national sample studied by Gurin, Veroff, and Feld (1960) felt they personally were inadequate as a marriage partner. They blamed themselves most for inadequacies in the division of labor (as provider or housekeeper) and secondarily for dominating the spouse or not being protective or considerate enough. To feel inadequate as a marriage partner depends on awareness of a gap between one's role conceptions and one's role enactments. The higher the standards one sets for oneself, the greater the likelihood of feeling inadequate. Such idealism is especially characteristic of young, college-educated men and women [whom Blood and Wolfe (1960) report are also the best role performers].

**Table 9-1—Role Inadequacy, by Sex, Education, and Age**

Age	Education	Men	Women
21-34	Grade school	44%	57%
	High school	65	62
	College	65	78
35-54	Grade school	55	37
	High school	45	55
	College	58	60
55 and over	Grade school	43	32
	High school	42	38
	College	50	—

Source: National sample of nearly 1,872 married persons. Reported in Gurin, Veroff, and Feld, 1960: 108. Reciprocal percentages of each group have never felt inadequate as a marriage partner.

Table 9-1 shows that with few exceptions the younger the individual and the greater his education, the greater the likelihood of feeling inadequate as a marriage partner. The most idealistic group of all from this point of view are young college-educated wives.

*Needs Affect Role Behavior.* So far we have pretended that role behavior is influenced entirely by ideology. Yet role enactments are also influenced by personality factors such as needs and drives. Each individual seeks to satisfy his needs through a socially acceptable role, indeed through the role he has been taught as appropriate for his sex. However, if his needs run counter to the prescribed role, the pattern of role behavior may be altered or even reversed. If both partners' needs are unconventional, role reversal may work well internally (even though it is likely to incur public censure). When, however, a clash of competing needs produces begrudging submission on the part of the loser, discontent is extra likely if the conflict is resolved by reversing the conventional sex roles:

Mother definitely dominates our family. Dad has withdrawn from the family circle and lets her make most of the decisions. He hasn't submitted wholeheartedly, however. There is a strong undercurrent of resentment and rebellion within him which my mother is a little afraid of.

Even when the wife needs to dominate and the husband needs to submit, both partners are likely to feel somewhat ambivalent about their role structure since it is not legitimate from the viewpoint of society.

*Circumstances Affect Role Behavior.* External circumstances also shape role enactments. A man may believe in being the breadwinner and psychologically need to be yet have no opportunity to do so. He may be unemployable due to illness or racial discrimination or temporarily unemployed by a strike or recession. Deprived of the chance to play his preferred role and forced perhaps into role reversal if the wife supports the family while he keeps house, the problems of role enactment become innumerable. The fact that couples may have no choice but to violate their own conceptions does not make the experience appreciably less demoralizing. To violate the norms of society and one's own conscience is disquieting no matter how good the excuse.

## Role Conflicts

In a sense discrepancies between one's own role conceptions and enactments could be called "role conflict"—intrapersonal conflict. But since marriage is a social system, we are primarily interested in the conflict that arises when one partner's enactments violate the other's expectations, that is, in interpersonal conflict. This is the situation Spiegel de-

finer as where "ego and alter have conflicting or incompatible notions of how to play their reciprocal roles."

Even the most compatible couples discover some points at which their role expectations fail to fit the partner's enactments. At the beginning of marriage (when each partner's role behavior is influenced primarily by his own preconceptions) no two people's assumptions about the details of marriage are ever identical.

Two main types of noncomplementary behavior occur. (1) Both partners may compete for the same role. For example, each may wish to decide unilaterally which family to visit at Christmas time. If each one has always been home for Christmas, both may take for granted that marriage enlarges rather than alters this pattern. Each partner's unconscious assumption contradicts what the other assumes, without either's knowing it. (2) Both partners may avoid a disliked task. Carrying out the garbage is a good example. Each may expect the other to do it and find no room for this activity among his conceptions of his own role. The husband may feel that it is women's work because it is connected with the food operation, while the wife feels it is men's work because the garbage can is outdoors. Regardless of their rationales they discover on the first day of housekeeping that they disagree about the task.

As soon as role discrepancies are discovered, there is a practical urgency about getting them resolved. Married living tends to be stymied until they are. By most couples expectations and enactments are realigned promptly and gracefully. If not, the stress on the marital bond can be severe.

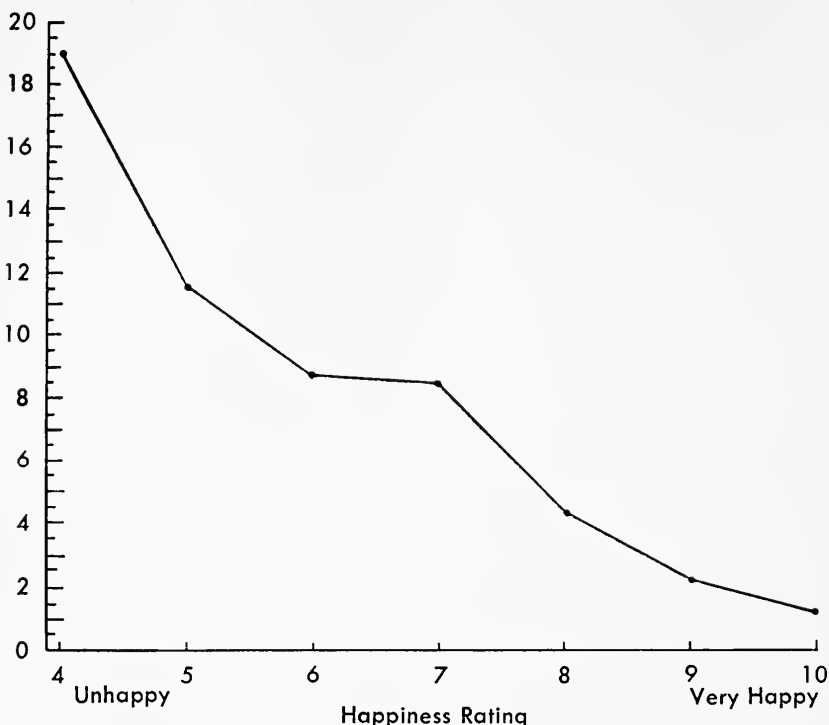
For example, take incompatibility in decision-making. Since women tend to be more feminist than men, it is rare to find a woman whose husband is more equalitarian than she. When this combination does occur, it causes little conflict. If the husband wants to give the wife more equality than she is interested in assuming, he may be disappointed but there is no struggle for power.

The opposite combination (an equalitarian wife and a patriarchal husband) is relatively common in the United States and very explosive. If the wife wants to be independent and the husband objects, friction is inevitable. When she is denied the voice she wants in decisions, she is apt to become a nagging wife.

The combination of patriarchal husband and equalitarian wife is so disastrous that it is found chiefly among divorced couples. In a study of the role ideas of 100 married and 100 divorced couples in Chillicothe, Ohio, Jacobson (1952) found that the divorced couples characteristically held this combination of views.

Figure 9-1, similarly, shows that unhappy marriages, short of divorce, involve large numbers of role conflicts. Typical examples include disappointment by the wife over the husband's failure to continue to be a

Number of Role Conflict Areas



Adapted from Ort, 1950: 696.

Source: 50 college marriages, median age 25.5 male, 24 female.

**Figure 9-1. Number of Role Conflicts, by Marriage Happiness Rating**

romantic lover, and disappointment by the husband at the wife's failure to assume an active sexual role in marriage. Couples rating their marriage tops in comparison to ten other married friends averaged only one such area of role conflict. In general the lower couples rated their marriages, the larger the number of role conflicts they reported. Taken together with Jacobson's finding of sharp discrepancies in role conceptions among divorced couples, the negative consequences of role conflicts are apparent.

*The Moralistic Dimension of Role Conflicts.* Role conflicts are difficult to cope with because they are laden with value judgments. Since role expectations are "evaluative standards," any husband who violates his wife's role expectations seems to be shirking his duty or infringing on her rights. Moreover, this is not a mere personal affront. Rather he transgresses against what society too expects of him. Not that our whole society really holds the same view (if it did there would be no occasion for conflicting expectations). Rather, the fact that role expectations are acquired unconsciously in childhood lends them an appearance of absolut-

ism they hardly deserve. The appearance, however, is convincing enough to give to role contenders a sense of self-righteousness and of moral indignation toward the spouse which is infuriating since he holds the same attitudes in return.

Though couples with incongruent role expectations tend to feel equally that "ego" is right and "alter" is wrong, the surrounding world is not likely to be divided so evenly. For example, an immigrant husband is likely to discover that Old World expectations are no longer reinforced by popular opinion but are socially condemned. As a result, his role enactments are censured not only by those within but also by others outside the social system of the family:

Occasionally my father has attempted to assume an authoritarian role. But his authoritarian attitude is in conflict with the democratic currents of our time. My father is vaguely aware of it and has sometimes seemed bewildered when his sporadic attempts to rule the family have not been successful. He tries to get his friends to sympathize with him but even they tell us just to humor him when he gets Napoleonic.

#### RESOLVING ROLE CONFLICTS

Role conflicts normally crop up early in marriage from incongruent expectations. They may also arise from discordant personality requirements and unpropitious practical circumstances. The first type are the most universal and will be the focus of the bulk of the remaining discussion. Methods of resolving role conflicts are one subtype of the decision-making methods to be discussed in Chapter 12. They will be presented here within the specific context of role conflict.

*Recognizing Role Discrepancies.* The first step in resolving role conflicts is to recognize them for what they are. The unconscious nature of most role ideas makes this difficult. Role discrepancies tend to be perceived so judgmentally that compromise or concession is difficult. Recognizing when the partner's discrepant behavior is not deliberately antagonistic but simply a reconstruction of his parents' marriage removes much of the venom from the conflict:

I didn't realize it when we were going together, but one of the little ways in which Anna and I differ crops up at meal times. She likes to talk a lot at meals and I don't. I know perfectly well where it came from. As far as my family was concerned, meals were a time for refueling and nothing else. Her family made meals into a big occasion where they talked about everything under the sun. So now Anna likes to chit chat about little everyday affairs and I get through way ahead of her.

Even if the ancestry of role problems is not immediately apparent, to see them as system problems rather than as individual deficiencies makes it easier to attack them without defensiveness. They are system problems in the sense that they must be solved if the marriage is to operate success-

fully. But the fault lies not in the sinfulness of either partner but in the lack of fit between the two.

*Adapting Role Behavior.* From the standpoint of the couple, conflict resolution always involves modifying both behavior and expectations. However, from the standpoint of the individual the solution may come either by changing his behavior or by changing his ideas (or both in case of compromise).

If I discover that my wife expects me to do more for her than I had originally expected, the most graceful thing for me to do is to mobilize myself to meet her extra expectations:

After we got married I found out how much Carl's folks had babied him. At first I thought it was ridiculous and I figured I'd force him to take care of himself by not doing things for him. It didn't work, though. He just got mad at me and we were both unhappy. So now I'm trying to baby him more myself. I figure maybe if I just pick up his clothes off the floor and forget it we'll both be happier.

To make concessions gracefully is crucial to their usefulness in working out a satisfactory role system. If the partner who extends himself does so begrudgingly, it can become a source of chronic irritation in the marriage even though the task itself gets done:

My father wanted to concentrate on his work and let my mother run the house all by herself. She has done everything ever since I can remember, but she always gripes about it to us kids. To him she keeps making remarks about how nothing ever gets done unless she does it. As a result he has given up even his few attempts to help out and developed more and more feelings of inferiority and failure in relation to her.

To make role changes gracefully depends not only on the maturity of the individual but also on the encouragement and support of the partner. If my efforts to change are rewarded by my spouse, I will be less apt to feel like a martyr. In the following case, the husband's support aided the wife in learning to enact a role they both agreed about:

When we were first married, Loren had to adjust to the fact that I didn't previously know how to cook and that I wouldn't be a good cook for quite a while (if ever). He learned to compliment me on my cooking (even though it wasn't very good) and thus encouraged me to learn to be a really good cook.

If, instead of accentuating the positive, this husband had criticized his wife's failures, she could easily have lost so much self-confidence that she would have feared trying anything new and never have progressed beyond the hamburger stage in her role performance.

Willingness to adapt one's behavior to the spouse's wishes distinguishes adjusted from maladjusted married couples (Buerkle, Anderson, and Badgley, 1961). For example, if the wife is bored with a party and wants



to leave but the husband is having a good time, a well-adjusted husband will tell his wife "We'll leave, since you want to go," while she is apt to say "I'll stay because you're enjoying yourself." Mutual willingness to defer to the feelings of the other does not resolve conflict, since it doesn't specify whether they should stay or leave. But it transforms conflict from a clash of wills to an Alphonse-Gaston contest of courtesy. The willingness of both partners to please the other is appreciated no matter which solution is chosen. Moreover, where both partners are willing to modify their behavior, compromise is often possible (each partner giving half way toward middle ground).

*Adapting Role Expectations.* In the previous section role conflicts were resolved by changing ego's behavior to meet the partner's expectations. The other possibility, where expectations differ, is that ego may renounce his claims and let the partner have her own way. This is preferable if the partner's role conceptions and/or personality needs are so firmly entrenched that they are not subject to change.

Tony makes all the ultimate decisions in our marriage. In fact he was the one who decided that I should go to work this year. It doesn't enter his head to ask what I think since he doesn't think it's any of my business to decide. I used to be very independent, but now I'm getting used to the way he tells me what to do.

This wife changed her conception of herself from independent to dependent and her expectations for her husband from sharing decisions to making them on his own. As a result, the discrepancy between her expectations and his was resolved and the marriage was equilibrated.

It takes only one partner willing to make such concessions to resolve role conflict. Yet in the best marriages both partners stand ready to alter their expectations if necessary. In another of Buerkle's examples the wife is offered a job but the husband feels she should stay home and take care of their family of thirteen- and seventeen-year-old boys. Adjusted wives in his study defer to the husband's judgment, saying they would give up their desire to go to work, whereas adjusted husbands typically allow her to go to work if she wants to. By not insisting on their own preferences, both partners turn a potential conflict situation into an accommodation.

Initially, the main task is to harmonize conflicts that arise out of incongruent expectations the couple bring to marriage. Later, the chief source of role conflicts is the stress of new circumstances confronting the couple—new children, new jobs, or unemployment. Since role conceptions are not immutable, they tend to be adapted to the life circumstances people actually experience. By a process of rationalization most people come to legitimize what originally may have been simply expedient in a difficult situation. Thus, Blood and Hamblin (1958) find that

when wives work after marriage, both partners become more equalitarian in their beliefs about authority relations than they were before marriage. Their expectations about marriage role behavior become adapted to the actualities of their life situation.

*The Adaptability of Women.* There is good reason to believe that both types of adaptation—of role behavior and of role expectations—are made more extensively by wives than by husbands. Even though ideal husbands are just as willing to be adaptable, the roles of women impose more changes on them than on men. As one coed looked ahead to marriage she saw it this way:

The major burden of adjusting falls to the wife. It is she who drops her name to take his. She has to quit her job to learn a new occupation—home-making. He lives the role of a husband an hour in the morning and a few hours in the evening whereas she spends fifteen hours a day functioning as a wife. He continues to make his own money while she is dependent upon him for even spending money. He continues to put most of his energy into pleasing his boss, whereas she starts devoting her energy to winning her husband's approval.

When role conflict occurs, wives also make the chief concessions. The very fact that marriage is their chief role in life gives them a greater stake in its success and more concern to make it work. As we shall see in Chapter 12, wives are more apt to undertake marriage counseling than husbands, searching more diligently for ways of adapting themselves to resolve the crises they encounter.

Though the average wife is more ready to change, happy is the marriage in which both partners are willing to be adaptable in the search for role equilibration.

## A Moving Equilibrium

Even though the first year of marriage is crucial for initiating a system of marriage roles, the process of role adjustment is never finished. Spiegel (1957) emphasizes the dynamic nature of the equilibria which are worked out in any particular marriage:

It is a part of the human condition that high levels of equilibrium figured by precise complementarity of roles are seldom maintained for long. Sooner or later disharmony enters the picture. Complementarity fails; the role systems characterizing the interpersonal relations move toward disequilibrium. The role partners disappoint each other's expectations. The failure of complementarity feeds back into the awareness of the participants in the form of tension, anxiety or hostility, and self-consciousness.

Then the process of re-equilibration must begin all over again. This readjustment process goes on for all couples throughout marriage.

Though the main outlines of each relationship are formed early in marriage, life doesn't remain static. As the years go by, couples enter new stages in the family life cycle which pose new problems. Growing old has inevitable repercussions. In ways too numerous to mention, life brings changes in each partner to which the other must adapt. This is why Harper (1949: 8) describes marriage as "a dynamic process of adaptation and readaptation to the changing external and internal demands of a continuing companionship."

One wife was very much aware of changes in her husband:

Chet has changed a lot since he's gotten this big store. You can't tell him anything any more. My father let him live in his house for three years without paying any rent and he never said "boo." But now he's in the money and he tells me off all the time. Maybe he doesn't need me any more. It happens to lots of men when they get rich.

In less conspicuous ways, circumstances and personalities change in every marriage. Hence, the process of fitting a husband's and wife's behavior into a reciprocal system never ends, so long as marriage lasts.

# *Love:*

## *Maintaining the*

### *Relationship*

In Chapter 4 we discussed the process by which love grows as personal relationships develop between men and women. Now we return to the concept of love within marriage and to the problem of maintaining over the years the person-to-person awareness developed to a high point during the transitional engagement and honeymoon periods. The greatest threat to this personalized relationship is indifference. However, more dramatic threats arise from outside and within marriage in crises, large and small, which must be coped with. This chapter is also concerned, more positively, with the informal, intangible ways in which husbands and wives can give each other emotional support, encouragement, and responsiveness through the changing years.

#### The Deterioration of Marriage

The average American marriage deteriorates almost from the beginning. The longer the marriage persists, the greater the deterioration. Partly this loss is psychological, a growing sense of disenchantment with the partner. But at the same time it is social in the sense that the partners' lives become increasingly disengaged from one another.

Some marriages deteriorate so much that they collapse completely

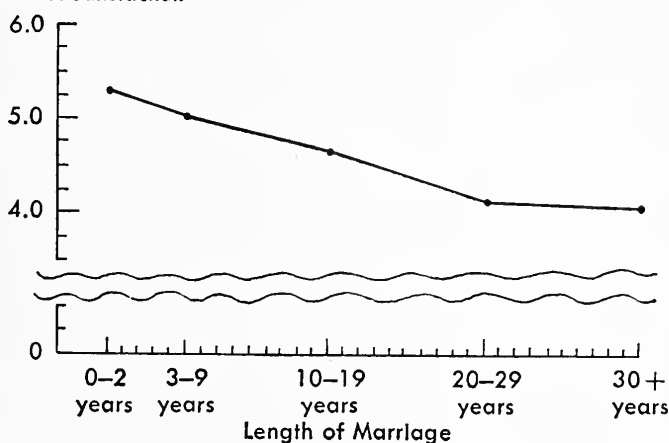
in separation and divorce. At the other extreme some manage to resist the pervasive processes of decay. In between are the bulk of married couples. They stick out their lives together but with steadily less feeling or actuality of togetherness.

### DISENCHANTMENT

Disenchantment may be defined as a process of devaluing the marriage in general and the spouse in particular. Although evaluating his marriage highly at first, the individual comes to view it with less enthusiasm, less satisfaction, less appreciation. The value of the marriage depreciates in his eyes, and he rates it less happily than before.

The evidence for this devaluation process is unmistakable. Figure 10-1

Average Marital Satisfaction



Adapted from Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 264.

Source: Representative sample of Detroit married women, 1955.

**Figure 10-1. Wife's Marital Satisfaction, by Length of Marriage**

gives only one of the many bodies of data which could be cited. It shows, for married women in Detroit, the combined satisfaction with their number of children, standard of living, and the husband's love, understanding, and companionship, weighted by the relative importance they attach to each aspect of marriage.

Figure 10-1 shows that for urban wives, marriage is less and less satisfactory as time goes on despite the gradual weeding out of the least satisfied couples through divorce. In this study 52 per cent are very satisfied during the first two years of marriage but only 6 per cent still are twenty years later. During the same interval the proportion of very dis-

satisfied wives jumps from zero to 21 per cent of those left after the loss of the divorced.

Asking people how *satisfied* they are is not the only way of discovering disenchantment. Gurin (1960: 103) finds similarly that old married couples evaluate their marriages less *happily* than young ones. This might mean only that American marriages are getting better with the passing decades, since neither of the previous studies deals with the same families over time. The acid test, however, is provided by Pinco's (1961) twenty-year follow-up report on Burgess and Wallin's 1,000 engaged couples. Over a twenty-year interval these husbands and wives declined significantly in their feeling of love for each other and in their sense of the permanence of their marriage. Put together, the three studies demonstrate that disenchantment affects most American marriages.

Two major factors contribute to this cooling off of enthusiasm: the transformation from anticipation to fulfillment; and the transformation of a new relationship into an old one.

*From Anticipation to Fulfillment.* In earlier chapters we suggested that much of the excitement of falling in love comes from the anticipation of new experiences in the future. In particular, postponement of sexual intimacy heightens the partners' attraction to each other.

From this point of view marriage brings an inevitable transformation of the emotional relationship from fever-pitch excitement to grateful fulfillment. Competitive insecurity shifts with engagement and marriage to solid security.

Winch (1952) describes this as the replacement of the "romantic love" of courtship by the "companionship love" of marriage. Levy and Munroe (1945: 59-61) call it "disillusionment" and give a classic illustration of what they mean, three years after marriage:

Mary Jane's frock for mornings at home looks a little frayed and faded. Her apron has definitely seen neither Lux nor a harsh washing soap for several days. She scrapes dispiritedly at the breakfast plates, slightly repulsive with congealed egg yolk and slimy cold bacon grease. For the fourteenth time she exhorts Junior to stop dawdling and eat his cereal. She is not at the moment enjoying her marriage very much. Why should she? Washing dishes day in and day out is not the same thing as canoeing in the moonlight with your heart's beloved. . . . She is remembering five o'clock with Jim waiting at the corner, [thinking] of dinner with dancing, of going to the movies, or a concert, or the theater, or just a long ferryboat ride. Of the difficult good-night kiss and the ecstatic knowledge that soon she would have Jim all the time for always. She is thinking rather wryly of how entrancing, how full of promise this battered dishpan looked when it first emerged from pink tissue paper at the shower the girls gave her. She may even think, a little cynically, as she surveys the gray grease-pocked surface of her dishwater, of the foaming pans of eternally virgin suds she expected from her perusal of the advertisements. Well, she's married now. She has her own house, her own dishpan, her husband, and her baby. All the time and for always. She doesn't even go

to the movies any more because there's no one to stay with Junior. She speaks so crossly to the child now that his tears fall into the objectionable cereal. Why on earth won't Jim let her get Mrs. Oldacre in to stay evenings? He'll be earning more soon; Mr. Bayswater practically told him he would be put in charge of the branch office as soon as old Fuzzy retired. Five dollars a week savings—much good that does anyway. Mary Jane's thoughts about her husband become quite definitely uncharitable. "If he only had the least understanding of the kind of life I have, but all he notices is Junior's shoes are scuffed out and he wouldn't even try that Bavarian Cream I fixed yesterday. It's all very well for him to think Jimmy Junior's cute when he sneaks out of bed—he doesn't have him all day and all night and nothing but Jimmy Junior."

To say that Mary Jane is disillusioned is to stress the idea that marriage is not what she *expected* it to be. For some people naivete about wedded bliss accentuates the disenchantment. But even the hardheaded realist who knows full well that marriage is not all canoeing in the moonlight experiences a change of pace when he shifts from courtship to marriage. At the very minimum, he finds marriage less intensely exciting than courtship:

This excited state of mind cannot endure the protracted association of marriage. The thrilling sexual tension which normally keeps engaged couples in a state of fervid and delighted expectation abates with frequent, satisfying intercourse. The element of uncertainty is dissipated—and there is no doubt that a goal we have not yet won is more intriguing than one which is wholly ours. We are deliciously stimulated by the desire for an object not yet obtained, but almost within our grasp. Sooner or later, when the flamboyant anticipations of betrothal give way to the sober satisfactions of marriage, we lapse back into our ordinary selves. (Levy and Munroe, p. 67.)

This is not to say that marriage does nothing to or for people. But whereas courtship gains intensity from its brevity and from the anticipation of forthcoming experience, marriage loses intensity because it is spread out over a long period of years and represents the climax of the search that began with the first date. A married person has *arrived*—and while he thereby acquires deep satisfactions, it is not so exciting as the struggle to get there.

*From Novelty to Familiarity.* Disenchantment takes place not only between courtship and marriage but also during marriage itself. The previous statistics involved losses in euphoria between early and later stages of marriage. These do not reflect contrasts between anticipation and fulfillment so much as between relationships that are still new and those that are no longer new.

Gradually the husband stops treasuring the partner and begins taking her for granted. At the beginning of marriage the contrast is sharp between having a wife and never having had one before. Every little thing she does is appreciated. She too is appreciated (as a person). The new husband is sensitive to her presence, aware of her as a new element in his



**They're newlyweds. He just got back  
from putting the garbage out.**

© King Features Syndicate

life. He misses her when he is away and is glad to re-establish contact when he returns.

By contrast, after enough years go by, the spouse becomes as familiar a part of the environment as a piece of furniture. Taken-for-grantedness has good aspects since it's one way of describing the security and permanence of the marriage bond. But it less happily means loss of sensitivity and awareness. Familiarity breeds contempt not so much in the sense of down-grading the partner as in ignoring her. The husband at breakfast with his head buried in the morning paper is the classic symbol of this disinterest in the partner.

#### DISENGAGEMENT

Closely related to disenchanted feelings is disengaged practice. The term "disengagement" has been applied to the withdrawal from social affairs that characterizes aging people (Cumming, *et al.*, 1960). It applies equally well to the withdrawal from mutual interaction that characterizes aging marriages. By aging marriages is meant not only the last few years of marriage but also the whole span from beginning to end. For disengagement as much as for disenchantment, marital deterioration begins when the honeymoon ends.



In most respects the honeymoon is the peak period of husband-wife interaction. In the sexual area this is especially true, as Chapter 18 will document. Most couples start their marriage with a high frequency of intercourse. Thereafter they have less and less from year to year. The same is true of almost every other facet of marital interaction.

Pineo (1961) finds a major twenty-year decrease in the proportion of leisure-time activities shared between the spouses. As time passes most couples curtail the share of their leisure time they spend together. This is especially true of outside activities—the kind of dating that brought them together in the first place and provided the basis on which their relationship developed. Americans do not ordinarily apply the term “dating” to married couples, but outside leisure-time activities after marriage are essentially that. The question at issue is not the drop in dating between engagement and marriage but from early marriage on. If Mary Jane, three years after marriage, already recalls canoeing nostalgically, how much more regretful will she be twenty-three years afterward? In Pineo’s study almost three-fourths of the Mary Janes had less and less “dating” during this interval. Curiously enough the amount of joint activity declines despite the fact that relatively few couples change their leisure-time preferences. Most couples continue to like the same sorts of activities, but they seldom get around to doing them together. The fact that not only the amount but also the proportion of shared to nonshared activities declines suggests that married couples become disengaged from each other faster than from life as a whole.

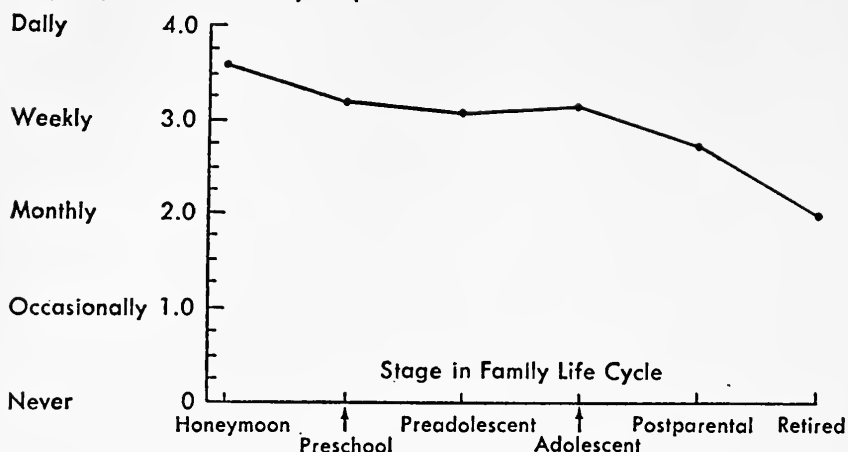
If disengagement occurred only in the outside world but not at home, it would not be so serious. It would mean only that the locale of the relationship had shifted to the home. Yet disengagement occurs within the home as well. As time goes by, couples pay less and less attention to each other even though they may be in the same room at the same time.

Figure 10-2 shows that the average husband “reports in” to his wife after work almost every day during the childless first three years of marriage (the “honeymoon” stage of the family life cycle). During the child-rearing years he has something to say only a few times a week and after the children leave home less than once a week. After retiring from work he has understandably little to say, but up to that point the decline is not due primarily to changes in the amount of information at his disposal but in his readiness to share it with his wife.

Lest it be thought that husbands are the only ones who disengage themselves from the marriage partner, it should be noted that Blood and Wolfe (1960: 192) also find that wives disengage themselves too. Specifically, honeymoon-stage wives usually tell their troubles to their husbands but “retired” wives do so only half the time.

Disengagement, therefore, seems to be mutual and pervasive. It is caused partly by the boredom that comes with experience, with the

## Frequency Husband Tells Day's Experiences



Adopted from Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 158.

Source: Representative cross section of Detroit married women, 1955.

**Figure 10-2. Frequency Husband Tells Day's Experiences, by Stage in Family Life Cycle**

transition from novelty to familiarity. Some activities are attractive when they are new but less interesting when the newness wears off. For honeymoon couples experiencing intercourse for the first time, the emphasis is on exploration and discovery, experimentation and innovation. Once they have tried everything, intercourse becomes no less satisfying but less intriguing. Hence the incentive to engage in it diminishes.

Similarly with talk. At first everything the husband encounters during the day is new to the wife. But as he conveys information to her from day to day, her knowledge steadily increases. Gradually whatever he might say resembles what she has already heard. Maybe he should say it anyway, but the urgency of doing so wanes:

When we were first married, Dan told me about his patients. He was just getting started in practice then and every new patient was another triumph on the road to success. I heard about every operation and struggled with all the diagnostic problems. Even though I didn't understand half of what he was talking about, it was exciting to sit there and listen to him. Now I hardly hear about it even if he just discovered that my best friend has cancer.

However, disengagement has other causes besides familiarization: aging and the distraction of children.

*The Impact of Aging.* Senescence begins at birth. Physiological capacity and activity decline progressively from birth to death. Most conspicuously, the individual's energy level sags. Every mother knows how actively preschoolers play, how exhausting a pace they maintain all day. Even young adults, by comparison, are sedentary creatures. The older

we become, the less energy we have for anything, the more attractive sleep and rest and passive entertainment appear.

This difference in energy levels afflicts every old man married to a young bride. She wants to go dancing while he wants to watch TV. When couples are matched in aging, senescence afflicts them simultaneously, slowing down the pace of life, so that they do less and less together, even things as effortless as talk.

*The Distraction of Children.* To complicate matters, husbands and wives have children. Usually they have them on purpose. They want them, are glad to have them, wouldn't give them up for anything. Without children life would be incomplete. But with children marriage receives another blow.

We have already seen in Figure 10-2 the waning reports from the average husband to the wife with the advent of children. Taking all subjects of conversation together, Feldman (1960) finds the birth of the first child cuts the time involved almost in half. Whereas newly married couples average two hours a day in conversation, young parents manage hardly more than one. Moreover, the content of discussion shifts from themselves and their interrelationship (inner feelings and sex) to their children. In other words they become primarily parents and only secondarily marriage partners.

Feldman ascribes this reorientation to the repercussions of having a young child in the house (see also Chapter 20). Says Feldman's writer:

During this period the couple's attention is focused almost constantly on the baby. They have little time and energy left over for each other. Meals are hurried and irregular and often husband and wife eat separately while one or the other performs some domestic chore. With little opportunity to go places and see people, there's less to talk about. The main topic is children. In the evening, when they finally have a few moments together, they're exhausted, physically and mentally.

When couples acquire children, the utter dependency of infancy forces them to disengage themselves from each other's arms and engage themselves in meeting the baby's needs. To this extent marital disengagement is an inevitable consequence of parenthood. The paradox is that as children grow less dependent and even after they leave home, few husbands and wives resume the interaction they earlier curtailed. Re-engagement, even when physically possible, seldom occurs.

Husbands and wives do so many things with their children that they are rarely alone together. The intimacy of a one-to-one relationship cannot flourish in the presence of chaperones, no matter how young. The larger the number of chaperones, the less the opportunity. According to Blood and Wolfe's research (p. 263), husbands and wives with more than three children can hardly see each other "across a crowded room," much less concentrate their attention on each other enough to be able to fall in love again.

## THE RELEVANCE OF AN IMPOSSIBLE IDEAL

Many years ago a pamphlet suggested that Christian love was an impossible ideal but nonetheless one which ought to guide human behavior as far as possible (MacGregor). The question for us is whether continuing married love at honeymoon pitch is equally impossible but nevertheless relevant.

The impossibility of maintaining the marriage relationship at honeymoon intensity should be apparent. The transformation of love with fulfillment and familiarization inevitably deflates the breathless excitement of love at the transition. A good thing it is, too, suggest Levy and Munroe (p. 67):

We can only surpass ourselves during emotional crises without seriously depleting our reserves. We can run from a bear very fast indeed, but if we made that speed habitual we would soon collapse entirely. Walking is the most practicable gait for common use, and marriage too must be paced at the rate of our usual temperament.

Nor is the change all loss. Over the years, married love gains something in breadth to make up for the loss in intensity. The reach of memory widens as husband and wife come to remember an increasingly rich variety of common events. Their knowledge of each other deepens too, as they learn to recognize the least perceptible cues to mood and desire. Symbolic of this cumulative understanding of each other is the wife's gradual increase in the proportion of the husband's friends who are her friends too (Blood and Wolfe, p. 159).

Disenchantment, then, in the sense of love transformed is inevitable. Yet it need not mean regret at having married or having had children, much less that the partners disengage themselves completely and charge off to supposedly greener pastures. Recognizing the inevitability of disenchantment, mature people accept it as part of the tragedy of human existence. Knowing they cannot keep it forever, makes them appreciate young love all the more while it lasts, and savor its memory after it has passed.

Despite the fact that the average married couple become significantly disenchanted over twenty years, only 1 per cent of Pineo's least disenchanted husbands have any more doubts at the end of that period that they would marry the same partner again and only 3 per cent have any more regret about their marriage. For practical purposes, therefore, it can be said that disenchantment doesn't necessarily destroy a couple's sense that they made the best possible marriage in committing their lives to each other—even though the emotional tone of their relationship necessarily changes over time.

What about disengagement? The impact of aging and children is partly unavoidable. Yet there is wide variation in the extent to which dis-

engagement occurs. Hardly any (less than 5 per cent) of Pineo's least disenchanted husbands decrease their frequency of kissing their wives, of confiding in them, or of settling disagreements by give and take. Only with respect to "dating" (sharing outside activities) do Pineo's married couples almost universally slow down over twenty years.

In some areas, then, marriage does not inevitably deteriorate. To keep the husband-wife relationship alive to the end is not impossible. A few couples largely achieve it. Even for those who don't, holding such an ideal is not irrelevant. Much of the difference between marriages that shrivel and those that thrive depends on the ideals that guide them. The rest depends on the efforts made to realize those ideals. Without effort high ideals do not implement themselves but sharpen dissatisfaction. Only as they are applied as guides to action do they prevent the deterioration of marriage.

## Means of Maintaining the Relationship

Although social scientists know how marriages deteriorate, they have yet to study how deterioration can be minimized. Nevertheless, the previous discussion suggests that the following activities may be useful: (1) to continue marital interaction, (2) to plan new experiences, (3) to make opportunities for intimacy, and (4) to ritualize sentimental occasions.

### CONTINUING MARITAL INTERACTION

In his classic analysis of personal relationships Homans (1950) points out that interaction produces sentiment. In Chapter 6 we noted how the sentiment of love tends to evaporate when interaction is prevented by separation. It evaporates just as fast when partners are together physically but fail to interact. When the proverbial newspaper—rather than a hundred miles—separates husband from wife, the effect is just as telling. Indeed, the unwillingness of husbands to interrupt reading the paper "for brief expressions of affection at the wife's approach" is precisely one of the chief disappointments in marriage for the wives interviewed by Ort (1950).

To continue interaction takes more than laying down the newspaper. Primarily it requires making the effort to do things together. Especially important is continuing to talk to each other and, reciprocally, to listen to what the other says. Soul-searching conversation is one characteristic of courtship that need not be entirely abandoned with marriage. Even though sooner or later the soul of each may be thoroughly searched, life does not stop with marriage. The outside world changes, providing

an ever-changing panorama of new topics for conversation. Moreover, people change in adulthood far more than is realized. Kelly (1955) finds that between young adulthood and middle age, men and women tend to become more religious in their values and more masculine in their interests. Taking broad areas of measurement, he finds 52 per cent change in his subjects' values, 55 per cent in their vocational interests, 69 per cent in their self-rated personality characteristics, and 92 per cent in their responses to attitude questions. These sweeping changes suggest that couples must talk about many subjects over the years if they are not to grow apart. Indeed, Pineo (1961) finds that the degree of consensus between husband and wife gradually decreases in a large proportion of marriages.

The challenge is clear. In most marriages consensus declines. As it does, growing areas of disagreement destroy the solidarity of marriage. Marriage cannot be a static affair. If it attempts to stand still, it will go backwards. Rather, marriage is, in Bernard Farber's terms, a "pair of mutually contingent careers." As each career changes, couples face the challenge of what Foote (1956) calls the "matching of husband and wife in phases of development." Matching requires husbands and wives to keep up a continuing dialogue with each other as long as they live.

Interaction is more than just talk. It is also doing things together that both partners enjoy. Chapter 17 documents the central importance of companionship in modern American marriages. Companionship means spending leisure time in mutually enjoyable activities. From Pineo's study we know that this is one of the aspects of marriage where disengagement occurs most rapidly. So effort is particularly needed if interaction in leisure is to be maintained.

Companionship, despite its importance, is not the only value sought in marriage. Anything one partner does *for* the other reinforces what is done *with* the other. Love is enhanced by both partners' contributions in the division of labor as much as by the good times they give each other. Especially when a contribution is "above and beyond the call of duty," it revitalizes the partner's appreciation:

Whenever my husband has a special assignment, he has to get up at 4:00 A.M. The night before I serve an early dinner and take charge of putting the children to bed so he may shower, lay out his things, and turn in very early. After everyone is settled, I take the responsibility for setting two alarm clocks—one by the bed for 4:00 and one in the bathroom for 4:15. When the first alarm goes off, I put my feet on the floor and assume my most cheerful face—a mighty hard task for an old sack hound like me. While Fred is shaving, I fix a hearty breakfast to give him a good start. Then while he is dressing, I comb my hair and put on lipstick to give him an attractive breakfast partner. When he starts his second cup of coffee, I go out and start the car and heater and come back and lay out his coat. As he leaves, we kiss and I remind him to be careful, then stand and wave as he drives away.

This wife's efforts are more than most wives can muster. But those who manage to put themselves out will be rewarded with a correspondingly profound sense of personal gratitude. Ditto for husbands. The more each partner does with and for the other, the stronger their relationship will be.

#### PLANNING NEW EXPERIENCES

Continuing marital interaction enables husbands and wives to keep up with changes occurring in the life of the partner. Some new dimensions to marital experience therefore are easily accessible. Even more, however, can be manufactured with a little effort. Since one basis of disenchantment is the replacement of novelty by familiarity, new experiences are anticorrosive.

Children from this point of view offer certain advantages. To the perceptive observer they provide an endless stream of cute sayings and new accomplishments. As they move through their developmental cycle, they present parents with new challenges and revive childhood memories to be shared.

Beyond these intrinsic novelties, however, lies a vast area of optional opportunities to be grasped or neglected according to the ingenuity of the parents. With children or without there are chances for travel, for making new friends, for enlarging the mind and the heart in reading and service. Outside the home there are jobs to be done, not just new organizations to be joined but new posts to be filled in old organizations and new tasks undertaken in old posts.

Even separate experiences can bring novelty to marriage provided they contribute to the growth of the individual or are shared with the partner vicariously through conversation. Too many husbands and wives are bored with each other because they are bored with themselves. To renew their own lives through mind-stretching and soul-stretching experiences would renew their appeal for the partner as well. Love cannot thrive on the disrespect that comes from awareness that the partner's life is empty and meaningless. This is especially a problem for young mothers. Tied down to a diaper-changing routine at home and cut off from meaningful contact with the outside world, they easily go to seed. Retaining their intellectual vitality and sense of identity is difficult under the circumstances, but correspondingly critical.

#### MAKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTIMACY

That children should be distracting is basically inevitable. It does not, however, have to be perpetual. During the decades when they are living with children, couples need opportunities to be alone. Before marriage,

privacy for quiet talk and unembarrassed affection is sought and prized. After marriage, couples may think they have ample privacy, but a closer look is apt to disclose the interfering presence of others, either in the flesh or via TV. The older children get, the later they stay up in the evening, whittling away at the private segment of parental lives. TV can be shut off but children hardly can.

The only practical solution to this problem is to get rid of the children (temporarily, that is!). To produce intervals of undistracted companionship, responsibility for the children needs to be shifted to someone else. Grandparents are the most convenient resource, if accessible. Otherwise hired babysitters or cooperative neighbors must be utilized until the children grow old enough to care for themselves.

In any case the essential task is to get away from the children and, for the wife, to get away from the house too, since it's her never-done workplace. How long parents can abandon their children depends on their resources both for child care and for external activities. Those amply endowed can manage whole weekends away. The rest may have to settle for an occasional evening.

Even at home it is possible to create enclaves of privacy in the midst of family living. Parents who feed their children early or in a separate room thereby gain opportunities for conversation or for reading their mail together. (To be sure, the parents' gain is the children's loss, and the two must be balanced against each other.) Some parents set aside times for togetherness before or after dinner, centered around cocktails beforehand or coffee afterwards.

What they do doesn't matter so long as it is meaningful to both partners. It need not necessarily be romantic or even recreational. It may be simply that the wife goes along on business trips or they go to conventions together or circulate petitions together. The essential factor is time:

If you have to acknowledge that you have been neglectful of the frail but fragrant flower of love, I would ask you to remember that your time is, after all, your life. As the moments tick by, and the sand runs swiftly through the hour glass, it is life itself that is slowly slipping away. You take time to work and time to play, time to eat and time to sleep, time for personal interests and time for social responsibilities. Surely, surely, in all this wealth of time which is yours, you can take time to keep in love. (Mace, 1958: 142.)

#### RITUALIZING ROMANTIC OCCASIONS

Romantic activities are not the only ones which contribute to the marital relationship, but they have a distinctive role to play. Romantic occasions are no panacea. For an incompatible couple they would be a farce. But for an old married couple whose affection is dying from lack of nourishment, they can replenish and sustain the bond between.



The least that can be accomplished is to recapture the past. To be sure, the fever-pitch of premarital romance can never be fully revived. But the memory of the golden age when love was new is worth preserving and recalling. This is the function of wedding anniversaries, not simply to celebrate a date on the calendar but to recreate old times, revisit the scenes of courtship, replay the old love songs. If marriage is worth celebrating with a reception and honeymoon, it is also worth re-celebrating from year to year.

The past is worth recapturing not only in terms of the climactic wedding event but also in the whole pattern of dating. Repeating treasured experiences of courtship is likely to recall old feelings of love. Going dancing again or to dinner or a show has extra value if it repeats an activity that was relished in the past.

Romantic occasions not only re-create the past but also create in the present. Love is enhanced by the little extras we label "romantic"—the candles on the table, the flowers, the gifts, the dressing up. These may be mere symbols of love, but they express it more visibly than words and help create a mood of appreciation and tenderness.

Many of these romantic touches are more important to women than to men. Women notoriously remember anniversaries when husbands forget. Women in Ort's study were disappointed that their husbands failed to give them surprise gifts as tokens of affection and failed to keep as clean and tidy as during courtship. Since such things come less naturally to men, theirs is the challenge to convert a humdrum marriage into one spiced with occasions of romantic revival.

The total absorption of man and maid with each other in courtship cannot be sustained in marriage. There are too many other roles to be played for that. But, intermittently, the routine of married living can be punctuated with romantic episodes. Marriage on the average must be less enchanting than courtship, but there is no reason why the average must be a ceiling above which the relationship can never rise. Special occasions—a walk in the moonlight, a midnight swim, or toasting marshmallows in the fireplace—can be escape hatches which enable couples to rise above their everyday level, even though the next day they must resume their normal course again. In the words of Levy and Munroe (p. 77), "Glamour in marriage cannot be continuous, but it needn't be absent. The morning after does not destroy the reality and value of the night before."

Even the ordinary level of married living holds options open to every couple. Married living does not have to be completely disenchanted, disengaged. The husband's goodbye and hello-again kiss is the most widespread daily ritual of romance. In Japan the whole family bows him out the door when he leaves and in again when he returns. Such

farewell and welcoming rituals symbolize the daily disruption and re-establishment of personal relationships among family members.

The fact that these are rituals may seem to some to destroy their meaning. If a kiss is purely perfunctory, what good is it? Admittedly a perfunctory kiss means less than an impassioned one. Nevertheless, it is not completely meaningless. Indeed the regularity of ritualized occasions is one of their chief values. Bossard and Boll's research (1950) emphasizes that rituals add strength to relationships by providing structured opportunities for interaction. Kissing twice daily is an overt acknowledgment to both partners of their continuing awareness of the relationship between them.

Romantic elements have relatively little intrinsic value. They are not necessary to the practical business of family living. The fact that they are extras is part of their value. The rest lies in the fact that they are elements of our culture. As culturally defined symbols of love they are overladen with positive connotations. Hardly basic ingredients of marriage, they are the frosting on the cake which make it more attractive for the participants.

## Emotional Support in Marriage

Up to this point our concern has been with the threat of atrophy to the marital relationship, the kind of atrophy that happens to muscles that are not used. The remainder of the chapter is concerned with the threat of injury to the relationship—injury either from external stress or internal friction. To put these concerns positively, they involve the provision of emotional support in marriage and of tension-reduction in marriage. "Emotional support" is what one partner supplies to the other for dealing with problems *outside* of marriage, whereas "tension" arises between partners *within* marriage.

"Marriage," here, is shorthand for the husband-wife relationship. Outside stresses arise from sources other than the spouse. They may come either from outside the home or from nonspousal sources within the home. Particularly for the wife, children are a major source of stress external to the marriage relationship. The value of this distinction is that if the source of difficulty is other than the spouse, he is a potential resource for help. But if the spouse is the source of the difficulty, help must be found elsewhere.

### MORAL SUPPORT FOR ROLE PERFORMANCE

The threat of trauma to the relationship arises only occasionally in most marriages. Special crises tax the individual's emotional resources to

the place where the spouse needs to come to the rescue. We shall turn to those situations shortly.

From day to day, however, both spouses must expend their energies in demanding roles. Short of crises that overtax their capacities, they face daily problems and opportunities that challenge their resourcefulness. That resourcefulness can be strengthened by the knowledge that the marriage partner stands in the wings encouraging the role performance.

*Support for Parental Roles.* For the first two decades of marriage, the wife's major role is raising children. Though the father has some marginal importance, while he is away at work the sole responsibility for the children falls to the wife. Especially when children are not yet in school or home for vacation, mothering is a full-time plus task. It is also a demanding task. The high energy level and immature untrustworthiness of children make them depend on the mother for supervision, guidance, and entertainment. Moreover, energy is largely drained one way. Children depend on their mother more than she can depend on them. She must constantly give of herself and is rarely rewarded for it. Children are seldom satisfied, always want more and more. No outside audience sees what goes on at home. Only the husband is interested enough and available enough to give her the moral support she needs to staff the home front while he is away all day.

How can he do this? Working hard at his own job is one way. Knowing he is doing his best gives her the impetus to hold up her end of the bargain. Teamwork in childrearing helps too. When he is home, he can demonstrate his awareness of her exhaustion by relieving her of the children for the evening. Interest in her experiences is even more sustaining. Taking time to listen to the day's events gives her a sense that he is concerned with what happens at home when he's not there.

Most rewarding of all, however, is applause. In the daily round of child care there are few occasions when performance is sufficiently virtuosic to bring down the house. But when those occasions do occur, the husband better applaud or expect disappointment over his disinterest. Perhaps in keeping house and especially in cooking there are more conspicuous accomplishments to win prizes. Occasional praise for good work as mother sustains morale even through rainy days. Mother's Day is one opportunity for bestowing recognition within the family. And if the 8:00 A.M. kiss wishes not only the husband but the wife well for the day's work, there is a daily occasion for moral support of the wife as mother.

*Support for Occupational Roles.* With the sexes reversed, the same supportive relationship applies to the husband's success at work. In some ways his work is even less visible to the wife than hers to him. However, the occupational system's judgments in the form of promotions

and salary increases are highly visible and naturally applauded by the rest of the family. The wife may recognize smaller accomplishments before the boss does, and from the very beginning provide encouragement even before accomplishment begins to manifest itself:

. . . what the wife does to help her husband in his work role is a sensitive indicator of how they feel about each other, what they mean to each other, what they do for each other. The nagging wife who undermines her husband's morale differs importantly from the appreciative wife who enhances his self-esteem. The wife's attitude and behavior in relation to the husband's chief role in life do much to shape his conception of himself, his ego-feelings. She is the mirror in which he sees himself—a mirror whose enhancing or detracting distortions become his image of himself. She is what Nelson Foote (1956) calls his "audience" when he tells of the events of his work life and who listens or turns a deaf ear. (Blood and Wolfe: p. 97.)

*Support for Community Roles.* The less routine the situation, the more useful moral support is. The old saying about the woman behind every great man reflects the value of encouragement to those who push ahead of their peers, who stick their necks out, who assume responsibility for hazardous innovations. Lesser men too and the wives of lesser men find marital encouragement crucial to venturing into roles new to them even though not to the world at large:

Bob still is sometimes hesitant about meeting people or trying new ventures, but he has gained much more self-confidence. Whenever he feels incapable of meeting a situation, I bolster up his ego by pointing out to him his other successes. Somehow, when I say, "You *can* do it!" I can just see his eyes light up in anticipation. It's very rewarding to me to build up his enthusiasm and his confidence in his own worth.

Moral support in both directions, from husband to wife as well as from wife to husband, enhances accomplishment in nonmarital roles and makes the husband-wife relationship a source of growth for both partners. Although personal growth also strengthens marriage. Dentler and Pineo (1960) conclude from their longitudinal study that "personal growth is more a resultant than a cause of marital adjustment." Presumably the moral support provided in good marriages is a major source of this personal growth.

#### THERAPY FOR EMOTIONAL STRESS

So far we have discussed the encouragement that enables husbands and wives to achieve their role objectives. But what if the husband doesn't get promoted? What if he gets fired instead? What if the wife's culinary masterpiece falls flat in the oven? Then what?

Frustration normally produces emotional stress. The form may vary from anger to depression. In either case, whether he is hostile toward

others or disappointed with himself, the individual finds his emotional equanimity disturbed.

The natural reaction to frustration is aggression (Dollard, 1939). In the economy of human nature, aggression is designed to demolish the frustrating object. But in the course of civilization, inhibitions and institutions arise which impede or divert so simple a sequence. Children may be very aggravating, but there are limits to the freedom with which a mother can beat them. When employers are the source of frustration, one cannot retaliate without making matters worse. Yet adrenalin is released into the blood stream and impels the body toward aggressive action.

The following cartoon illustrates the threat which external frustration presents to the marital relationship (and incidentally, the parent-child one, too). Wives, similarly, may be short-tempered with their husbands after days when everything goes wrong. In some cases external stress leads to crises at home which would not otherwise arise. In other cases an angry mood intensifies what otherwise would be a milder difficulty.

#### THERAPEUTIC UTILIZATION OF THE PARTNER

When someone is emotionally upset by an external crisis, he faces a choice whether to turn to his partner with his troubles, to turn to some other resource, or to handle it on his own. What action he takes depends on the nature of the problem and varies also between the sexes.

**Table 10-1—Ways of Handling Worries and Unhappiness, by Sex**

Way of Handling	WORRIES		UNHAPPY PERIODS	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Passive reaction	38%	30%	26%	20%
Prayer	8	23	22	40
Informal help-seeking	22	28	19	21
Direct coping reaction	21	9	9	4
Miscellaneous	11	10	24	15
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of cases	1,077	1,383	1,077	1,383

Adapted from Gurin et al., 1960: 372, 374. Source: National sample of adults (married and single).

Table 10-1 shows that a large minority of both men and women sit out their troubles passively. They may try to sleep them off or eat or drink them away. They may try to forget about them by watching TV, going to the movies, or engaging in some other kind of recreation. Relatively few men and even fewer women attack their problems directly, seeking to solve them on their own. The remainder turn to outside



1



2

sources of help. Women, especially, depend more on other persons (or another Person) for help with their troubles.

The self-reliance of men versus the dependence of women is the chief conclusion to be drawn from Table 10-1. Unfortunately we do



3



4

not know anything about the comparative adequacy of these methods of dealing with worries and unhappiness, except that direct coping attempts are more characteristic of better educated people.

Our main interest is in those who turn to others for help with

emotional troubles. From Table 10-1, it is apparent that most people do not turn first to a friend or relative when they have this sort of trouble. Nevertheless, for a minority of American men and women, other persons are the first line of defense in time of trouble. Table 10-2 shows the relative importance of all sorts of primary relations compared to professional resources for those who mention any outside source of help.

**Table 10-2—Other Persons Utilized in Handling Worries and Unhappiness**

Source of Help	Worries	Periods of Unhappiness
Informal		
Spouse	59%	19%
Parents or children	7	15
Other relatives	8	18
Friends, acquaintances	17	38
Formal		
Clergyman	4	6
Doctor	4	4
Total	99%	100%
No. of cases	689	545

Adapted from Gurin et al., 1960: 368. Source: National sample of adults (married and single).

Table 10-2 shows that if adult men and women turn anywhere for help with their emotional problems, they usually go where they have the closest personal relationships. The marriage partner is a major resource for those who are married (only three-fourths of Gurin's sample are), provided the spouse is neither the cause of the difficulty nor equally involved in it. Whenever the source of difficulty is external to the marriage and impinges on only one partner, the other is the most available source of potential help.

Blood and Wolfe provide evidence about just such circumstances. They asked married women how often they tell their husbands their troubles after a bad day (that is, after experiencing unilateral frustration).

Table 10-3 shows that American wives are usually selective about telling their troubles. They seldom go to either extreme, neither always nor never telling the husband. Selectivity is accentuated in high status families, with half-the-time commonest among college-educated wives. Blood and Wolfe suggest that high-status wives may be "better able to inhibit their impulses, waiting for times when they need help most and excluding those when the husband is too busy to be bothered. Low-status wives, on the other hand, exhibit less emotional restraint, turning to their husbands more indiscriminately. Or if rebuffed too often by unsympathetic responses, they withdraw from contact altogether" (p. 193).



**Table 10-3—Therapeutic Utilization of Husband after a Bad Day, by Husband's Occupation**

	Husband's Occupation				
Frequency Wife Tells Husband Her Troubles	BLUE COLLAR		WHITE COLLAR		Total
	Low	High	Low	High	
Always	25%	23%	19%	17%	22%
Usually	23	20	34	24	24
Half the time	23	26	30	32	27
Seldom	16	21	10	21	18
Never	13	10	7	6	9
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of families	173	173	88	157	591

Adapted from Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 194. Source: Representative sample of Detroit wives (whites only).

The frequency of turning to the partner with emotional troubles depends on both partners' characteristics. The more mature the troubled individual, the less often he tells his troubles out of consideration for the partner's own problems and responsibilities. On the other hand, the more helpful the partner's response, the more often the individual finds it rewarding to tell his troubles. Hence, in the best of marriages, therapeutic utilization of the partner is highly selective. The individual tells those troubles that bother him most and where his own resources are least adequate. At the same time he gauges his telling to the partner's ability to listen on that particular day. He neither depends on the partner to solve every little problem nor hesitates to approach the partner when help is needed and available.

When the husband is unavailable, friends and relatives are alternative resources. Or where the stress is milder in nature, the individual may be able to cope with it satisfactorily himself without allowing it to damage his relationship to others. Short of full-blown therapy, a sense of humor takes the edge off emotional tension and prevents it from becoming contagious:

The first few years of our marriage, I'd come home grumpy from the office every once in a while. After a while, Joyce got so familiar with these moods that she kiddingly said I was "acting like a bear." After that all I had to do was growl and she knew I was feeling grouchy again. The bear touch was so silly it made both of us laugh instead of getting teed off at each other.

The problem here is to prevent external stress from setting off displaced aggression followed by counteraggression. To prevent mutual recrimination, all that is needed is awareness that external grievances are involved. Whether this awareness is created by factual reporting, by private signals, or by facial expression does not matter as long as the message gets across. Once it does, the spouse can put on her proverbial kid gloves and mobilize her therapeutic responses.

*Therapeutic Response to the Partner's Troubles.* Having discussed whether and when the troubled individual should turn to his partner for emotional relief, we come now to the question of the nature of the help the partner can give.

The partner's first task is to understand. This depends on listening to the tale of woe. Listening is not as easy as it sounds, especially after the advent of children. Husband and wife have to compete for attention with the demands of other family members. Even without children there are competing attractions—household tasks for the wife, the day's mail and the evening paper for the husband, TV for both. Yet without giving wholehearted attention, it is impossible to respond appropriately.

Listening in itself has some therapeutic value. Emotional catharsis is a standard means of tension-reduction, requiring only an interested audience willing to hear out the ventilation of pent-up feeling. However, to be most effective, listening needs to be followed by responsiveness to the problems raised. What response is most appropriate depends on the nature of the problem. Taking all sorts of bad days put together, the husbands in Blood and Wolfe's study gave the responses shown in Table 10-4.

**Table 10-4—Comparative Effectiveness of Therapeutic Responses**

Husband's Response When Wife Tells Troubles	Percentage of Total Husbands	Wife's Emotional Relief*
Help in withdrawing from the situation	3%	3.80
Sympathy and affection	32	3.63
Advice and discussion of how wife can solve problem	23	3.53
Help in solving the problem	7	3.31
Passive listening	20	2.92
Dismissal as unimportant	8	2.79
Criticism and rejection	7	1.89
	<hr/>	
	Total	100%
	No. of cases	643
* Code: Wife feels much better	4 points	
A little better	3 points	
Sometimes better, sometimes worse	2 points	
About the same	1 point	
Worse	No points	

Adopted from Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 206. Source: Representative sample of Detroit wives (excluding those who never tell their troubles).

The most common reactions of Detroit husbands are sympathy and advice. Passive listening can hardly be termed a reaction by this definition, yet leaves the wife better off than if he were to react negatively—brushing off her troubles or criticizing her for getting into them or for telling him about them.

Of the positive responses, help in solving the problems does not relieve the wife's feelings immediately as much but in the long run leaves

the wife most satisfied with her husband's understanding of her problems and feelings. The most effective immediate relief for the wife comes from husbands who help her forget her troubles by taking her out to dinner or to some other distracting activity. Since bad days usually occur at home, leaving home reduces the tension most expeditiously. Sympathy and affection provide pure emotional support, whereas advice and discussion are more practically oriented toward preventing the problem from arising again or suggesting ways of resolving whatever remains of it now.

For any particular couple no one therapeutic method is likely to be useful under all circumstances. The two forms of help plus advice and sympathy are tools to be employed as most appropriate. When partners provide such means of therapy, external stresses are converted from threats into occasions for strengthening the marriage.

However, the partner's resources must not be taxed beyond his capacity to respond positively. Better not to rely on him at all than to bludgeon him into negative responses. Under such circumstances alternative resources ease the load on the marriage circuit and prevent it from blowing a fuse.

#### THERAPY FOR PHYSICAL STRESS

Relatively little is known about the nursing care provided marriage partners for their physical ailments. In many respects the problems are analogous to those raised by external emotional stresses. In fact there may be considerable overlapping between the two, since as much as half of all physical illnesses apparently are psychogenic. If the husband breaks his leg skiing, the wife is likely to be sympathetic (provided she doesn't think he was a fool to attempt the trail in the first place). But if he wakes up with a headache and wants to be taken care of like a little boy while he misses a day's pay, then what? Then some wives (and husbands) feel that sympathy is dangerous:

Every once in a while, Alex refuses to get up in the morning. He mutters some excuse about his back acting up again and wants me to bring him all sorts of hot water bottles and serve him breakfast in bed. He exaggerates his ailments so and puts on such an act that it makes me mad. I may bring him a little something but I am careful not to overdo it because I don't want to spoil him when he acts so childish.

To be sure, such behavior *is* childish. It involves, however, a transparent plea for sympathy and nurturance. To withhold it is only to make matters worse, that is, to create tension between husband and wife where originally it existed only within the sick individual.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the patient is likely to get well faster if his illness is accepted. After he has had an adequate dose of nursing care,

however, the time may come when it needs to be supplemented by increasing encouragement to resume his normal life.

Parsons and Fox (1952) believe that this combination of "permissive-supportive and disciplinary facets of treating illness is peculiarly difficult to maintain in the kind of situation presented by the American family." Hence professional resources are often needed to provide therapy for physical illnesses. Nevertheless, even where the patient is removed to the hospital for primary care, the partner's sympathy and encouragement versus suspicion and hostility have much to do with hastening or delaying his recovery. In any case whether the patient feels supported or condemned by the spouse determines whether his illness strengthens or weakens the marriage bond.

## Tension-Reduction in Marriage

In the last chapter conflicts between marriage role expectations and the partner's enactments were discussed. Chapter 12 will be devoted to ways of resolving conflicts in allocating family resources of time and energy and money. For this chapter there remains the kind of tension that arises in marriage from the personal habits of the partner.

### TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

A tremendous trifle is any problem that is tremendously significant to the injured party but merely a trifle to the "innocent" one. To the outsider also these often seem trifling issues—the cap left off the toothpaste, the dirty socks on the bedroom floor, or the slurped soup. They seem extra trifling to the offender if he is unaware of his behavior. Indeed one whole class of tremendous trifles involves sleeping habits for which awareness is impossible. Did you ever know anyone who heard himself snore?

*The Intimacy of Marriage.* One reason why trifles are more apt to become tremendous in marriage than anywhere else in life is the intimacy of married living. Most people are on their best behavior in public. But at home they literally let their hair down. The usual barriers of privacy are broken and the result is often disgusting. The waste products of the menstrual cycle, the digestive system, and other biological processes cannot be disposed of entirely in secret. Dirty clothes, dirty dishes, yesterday's papers, and today's garbage clutter up the house. In living together under the same small roof, the partners are exposed to the seamier aspects of each other's lives. As a result, the relationship they had built on the prettier aspects of life is subjected to strain.

These intimacies often involve facets of life where modesty or clean-

liness was learned the hard way. The partner's disgusting acts revive childhood anxieties and challenge hard-won forms of personality structure. Unconsciously they arouse forgotten fears of parental punishment or loss of love. Hence the emotional undertones that give trifles such tremendous impact.

*The Constancy of Marriage.* A second source of intensification for marital tensions is prolonged exposure to the irritant. A child can tolerate exposure to physical irritants for limited periods, but if he keeps on long enough he will develop an allergy. Similarly in human relations we can take irritating behavior a few hours a day or a few days a week but to have to cope with it constantly is more difficult.

#### CUTTING TREMENDOUS TRIFLES DOWN TO SIZE

Tremendous trifles cause lots of damage. When the anxiety in the threatened partner explodes in denunciation of the offending spouse, the latter reciprocates defensively. Conflict and mutual recrimination become chronic if the source of trouble is literally an everyday affair. The fact that the issue is trifling makes it harder to deal with rationally. Major tragedies are more apt to call out the best in an individual, but petty irritants get handled in petty ways. As the saying goes, "It is easy to sit on a mountain but hard to sit on a tack!"

*Can the Leopard Change His Spots?* The indignant partner naturally wants to persuade his spouse to reform. "If only John would remember to hang up his coat when he comes in!" Since a word to the wise is not sufficient, a reminder campaign is undertaken. "Don't forget to hang up your coat, John!" (said as sweetly as possible). Being a good husband, John dutifully obeys. The trouble is he doesn't get the habit. When Jane isn't around to remind him, he forgets.

Why do reform movements so seldom succeed? The reasons it is hard to change are in many ways analogous to those that motivate the campaign. Personal habits are so ingrained that they don't respond easily to New Year's resolutions. Sins of omission or commission are often so habitual that they are omitted automatically.

Occasionally a leopard does change his spots. The partner's reminders may succeed in making him aware of his behavior. Self-consciousness may be sufficient to change the disliked behavior.

But crusades often backfire. The trifling nature of the issue makes it easy to retort that the spouse is supercritical. Even if the partner reacts sympathetically to criticism, carrying out the resolve to "be a good boy" may be difficult. Unconscious habits do not respond easily to sheer will power.

If the offensive habit persists, the crusader becomes a martyr and finally a tyrant. Gentle reminders give way to venomous nagging. Barbed

attacks antagonize the victim. Ultimately a state of war breaks out—not “massive retaliation” to be sure, but sporadic sniping on one side and revenge on the other. Aggression may be overt—with quarreling galore. Or it may be covert, harder to recognize but still vindictive, in the form of sarcasm, withholding sexual intercourse, or withdrawal into moodiness. Whatever its form such tension seriously undermines husband-wife relationships.

*Draining Off Negative Feelings.* If the offender turns out to be immutable, what then? The next alternative is to divert the critic’s resentment into harmless channels.

For some couples humor provides an outlet. Humor must be handled with care or it explodes. When the joker’s motivation is hostile, humor easily turns into sarcasm more barbed than open criticism. Moreover, an insecure spouse may not be able to take even the mildest ribbing. Successful use of humor to reduce tension depends on whether the couple can laugh *together* about their “terrible little problem,” or whether the problem-spouse feels he is being laughed *at*. Even if his feeling is mistaken, it means the joking partner must “lay off.”

Where even humor is too aggressive to preserve peace in the household, indirect outlets are the only recourse. Traditionally, chopping wood provided vigorous exercise to drain off the adrenalin released by anger. The following couple devised a more psychological approach:

Denny and I have a little scheme worked out which works wonders for us. We both have habits the other dislikes, and for a while we tried to talk each other out of them. It was no go. Then we got the idea of putting up a sheet of paper on the inside of a closet door with two columns—one for him and one for me. Then whenever he does some little thing I don’t like, I go and put down a black mark under his name. And he does the same for me. There’s no competition involved because we both win—it gives us both a chance to vent our bad feelings in a tangible way so that we can live together much more happily.

*Acquiring Immunity.* Perhaps the most satisfactory way out of tremendous trifles is to accept the irritating behavior as inconsequential. Developing tolerance of the intolerable is not easy. The reasons that made trifles tremendous in the first place bar the way to lightheartedness. Nevertheless, desensitization is sometimes possible.

The crucial step is to reduce expectations—to accept the fact that the difficulties are irremediable. Sometimes resignation comes through sheer exhaustion. Sometimes it comes through self-insight, through realizing that one’s sensitivity stems not so much from the grossness of the partner’s behavior as from one’s own anxieties learned in childhood. Similarly, one may gain an understanding of the partner’s situation—that it is no simple matter for him to change.

At other times, the critic decides that keeping up the battle does more harm than good, so it is time to call a cease fire:

It really gets my goat to waste electricity. For years I've been trying to get Molly to remember to shut off the lights when she leaves a room. Yet every-time I come home the house is ablaze with light. Lately I've begun to realize that the reason Molly reacts so strongly to what I say is not because she doesn't want to turn off the lights but because I keep harping on it, heckling and nagging her. What's the use of causing all that trouble if it only saves a dollar a month on the electric bill? I've decided I'd rather pay the extra dollar.

Sometimes the critic can accomplish a good deal by a do-it-yourself policy. With a fraction of the energy expended on his verbal barrage, all the switches in the house could be turned off. Developing immunity doesn't require learning to live with mass illumination, with clutter, or any other disliked condition. It requires only being able to live with the spouse. If the spouse is hopeless, then the critic can take over the responsibility himself.

One characteristic of maturity is the ability to accept the inevitable. In marriage, compromise is not always possible, especially when the issue involves unconscious habits learned in childhood. Under such circumstances the only way to tension-reduction may be to accept the partner as he is. Better to preserve the marriage bond than to allow jousting over a hopeless issue to destroy their love. Habits that appear to be insignificant may be so crucial to his character and defensive structure that giving them up (whether voluntarily or under coercion) causes an alarming increase in his anxiety. Recognizing this, the partner may conclude that a live-and-let-live accommodation would be the best solution, provided the irritating behavior doesn't create too much anxiety in him!

# *Divorce and Remarriage*

For those who fail to maintain their love or whose marriage is a vicious cycle from the very beginning, divorce and remarriage offer alternative paths to the values sought in marriage. The turning point is reached when one partner (or both) concludes that his chances of achieving those values are greater in a future marriage than in the present one, or else that the present relationship's costs are greater than the rewards.

## Types of Dissolution

In working-class circles desertion is common. The man leaves for destinations unknown, abandoning wife and children to fend for themselves as best they can. In the middle-class, marriages end more deliberately. Husband and wife notify each other of their intentions and legalize their decisions.

Three legal settlements are possible. (1) Marriages may be annulled if it can be proved they were contracted by force or deception. The grounds for annulment vary from state to state, but it always involves legal recognition that there was no true marriage in the first place.

(2) Legal separations may be arranged by couples who wish to live separately but have no desire to marry anyone else. An official agreement usually divides up the family's financial resources and arranges



for the care of the children. The marriage remains legally intact even if the couple live apart for the rest of their lives.

(3) Divorce is the only legal way of ending marriages that were tried and failed. Unlike annulment, divorce does not undo the original marriage but recognizes its end.

*Attitudes Toward Dissolution.* Nobody believes in forcing people to live together. Just because people are technically married doesn't mean they are legally obligated to cohabit. Society may encourage people to have another try at reconciliation. But in the long run, all agree that couples have a right to separate if they can't stand one another. Hence no one opposes separations in principle, nor their official recognition in legal form. Likewise, there is general agreement on the principle of annulments. Everybody recognizes that some circumstances make marriages invalid.

Controversy centers only around divorce. Some churches take literally the words in the wedding ceremony: "What God hath joined, let no man put asunder." To the Catholic Church, which views marriage as a religious sacrament, divorce is inconceivable. Though some Catholics secure legal divorces, this does not dissolve their marriage in the eyes of the Church. Consequently a divorced Catholic who marries again is considered to be living in adultery.

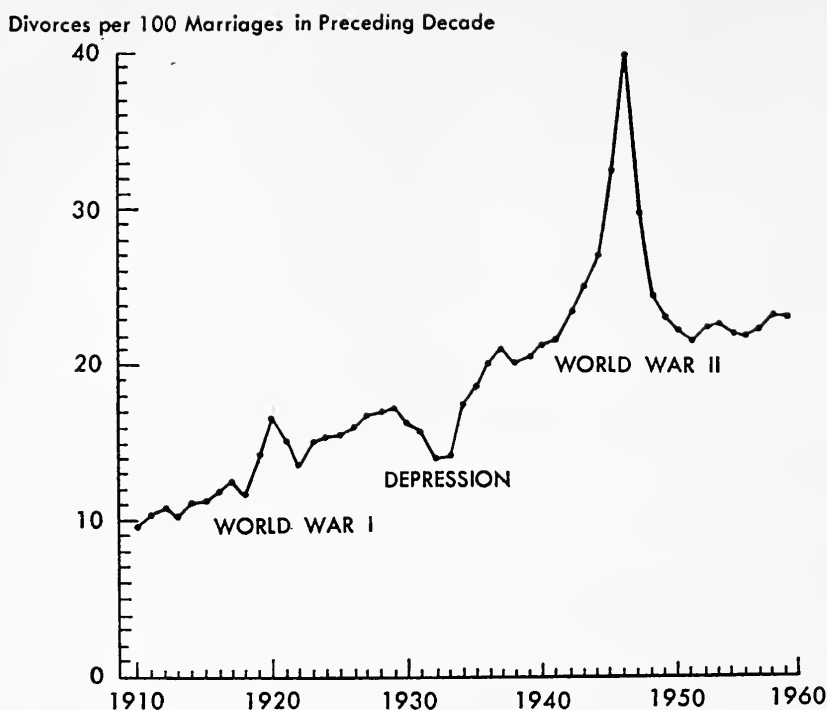
Other churches believe that if a marriage dissolves through the inability of the couple to live together, they should have another opportunity to establish a home. For such churches (and for nonreligious people), divorce is not in itself a problem but rather the official record that a marriage has failed. For them, unworkable marriages are the problem.

Recognizing the disagreement over the legitimacy of divorce, this chapter will nevertheless use the term to summarize all forms of marital dissolution since divorces are much more common than annulments and legal separations. The causes and incidence of all three types are essentially the same, save for the religious factor.

## The Incidence of Divorce

Beginning about 1875, the divorce rate in the United States began to rise (Bogue, 1959: 239). It continued to climb at a fairly steady rate for nearly 75 years, reaching a spectacular peak at the end of World War II. However, during the 1950's the upward trend slowed down markedly.

The main causes of the long-term rise in the American divorce rate were the urbanization and industrialization of our society. With increased anonymity and mobility, there has been a weakening of the social con-



Computed from Bogue, 1959: 238-39. For example, there were 23.2 divorces in 1958 for every 100 marriages averaged over 1948-57 inclusive.

**Figure 11-1. Divorces per 100 Marriages in Preceding Decade, 1910-1958**

trols that formerly held couples together by external pressure and provided a group chaperonage to prevent them from getting involved in extramarital alliances.

Although Figure 11-1 implies that almost one-fourth of all American marriages end in divorce, it should be remembered that these statistics include both first divorces and subsequent ones. Since remarriages after divorce have a higher divorce rate than first marriages, a more likely estimate of the divorce hazard for first marriages is about one in five.

However, this hazard is not distributed evenly among the marrying population. The higher the social status of the partners, the lower the divorce rate. In the lower strata of the population, marriage failure is phenomenally high, especially when formal divorce rates are combined with informal desertion rates (Kephart and Monahan, 1952).

To cite only one study, Table 11-1 shows that business and professional men have only two-thirds as many divorces as the general popula-

**Table 11-1—Index of Proneness to Divorce, by Occupation**

Occupation	Ratio of Number of Divorces to Size of Occupational Category
Business and professional	68%
Clerical, sales, and service	83
Skilled workers, foremen	74
Semiskilled, operatives	126
Unskilled	180
Total	100%
No. of cases	425

Adapted from Goode, 1956: 47. Source: Random sample of Detroit divorces, 1947-48.

tion whereas unskilled workers have almost double the usual divorce rate. In addition to economic problems, low-status families have a less stable way of life characterized by less skill in communication and decision-making and less self-discipline and self-control, all of which result in husband-wife conflict. Moreover, they participate in relatively few organizations that would lend them external support. Conversely, high-status families with stable, ample incomes have both skill in personal interaction and integration into the community through organizational participation, factors which stabilize their marriages. The result is that divorce rates among college graduates sometimes run as low as the 4 per cent and 9 per cent reported for the Dartmouth College classes of 1929 and 1930 at the time of their twenty-fifth reunions.

#### WHEN DIVORCE OCCURS

Despite the jokes about the "Seven Year Itch" and other supposedly hazardous intervals, the worst year of marriage is the first. At least, more marriages break up then than in any other single year (see Fig. 11-2). From the very beginning the worst incompatibilities become apparent. Sexual incompatibility and clashes of personality particularly undermine the possibilities for personal relationships and lead to quick dissolutions (Kephart, 1954a: 6, and Goode, 1956: 128).

Figure 11-2 shows how large a proportion of the marriages that fail do so in the first few years of marriage. The process is analogous to oil-refining. The most volatile marriages crack up first and then the worst of those remaining, until after five or ten years most of the marriages still intact are capable of surviving indefinitely.

When husband and wife separate, the marriage for all practical purposes ends. Because of various legal complications (including in many states compulsory "cooling off" periods as well as crowded legal dockets), the interval between marriage and divorce is considerably longer. In the Philadelphia sample the median interval from marriage to separation was five years, whereas the typical divorce decree did not come through for

Percentage of All Divorces



Adapted from Kephart, 1954a: 290.

Source: Sample of divorces granted in a Philadelphia court, 1937-50.

**Figure 11-2. Duration of Marriage before Predivorce Separation**

five more years. By 1958 the combined interval from marriage to divorce for twelve states had shrunk to 6.4, suggesting that the tempo of dissolution has quickened in recent years (N.O.V.S.).

To summarize, divorce strikes hardest at low-status, youthful marriages in their earliest years. These three factors all suggest immaturity in one form or another. The sheer lapse of time involved in going through the divorce process enables some individuals to mature enough to function better in their second marriages (see below).

## The Causes of Divorce

It is impossible to pin down precisely the causes of divorce. The official causes (the legal grounds on which the judge grants the decree) tell us little. In recent years the great majority of divorces are granted on grounds of "cruelty," a notoriously vague term. Most of the rest are based on desertion, leaving unnoted the reason why the husband left home (N.O.V.S.). Human resourcefulness is nowhere so apparent as in states that allow only adultery as a ground for divorce. Whole businesses that offer "evidence" of adultery to those who wish to purchase it flourish there.

It is possible to learn more about the causes of divorce by asking

lawyers or their clients to name them. Table 11-2 combines the opinions of Idaho lawyers about the "real" causes in cases they handled with the opinions of Detroit divorcées about the causes of their own difficulties. The latter picture is biased from the feminine point of view and underestimates the wife's own contribution to marital failure.

**Table 11-2—Causes of Divorce According to Lawyers and Divorcées**

IDAHO LAWYERS*		DETROIT DIVORCÉES†	
Cause	Percentage	Cause	Percentage
Financial problems, nonsupport	20%	Consumption problems, nonsupport	21%
Adultery	19	Triangle	6
Drunkenness	18	Drinking	12
Basic incompatibility	11	Personality clashes	11
Irresponsibility	6	Lack of interest in home life	9
Immaturity	5	"Drinking, gambling, helling around"	12
Cruelty	5	Authority problems	12
Cultural differences	4	Conflicting values	8
Sexual incompatibility	4	Sexual problems	1
Desertion	3	Desertion	3
In-laws	3	Relatives	2
Miscellaneous	2	Miscellaneous	3
Total	100%		100%
Number	282		425

Sources:

\* Hornsworth and Minnis, 1955.

† Goode, 1956: 123.

Table 11-2 lists the lawyers' opinions in order of frequency, giving equivalent categories from Goode's study as nearly as can be determined. Economic problems are conspicuously prominent. Families depend so heavily on the husband's income that inadequate or wasted earnings have disastrous repercussions on family solidarity. Adultery and drinking would rank higher for the divorcées if what Goode calls the "complex" of drinking, gambling, and "helling around" with other women were subdivided into its component parts. Authority problems involve attempts by husbands to dominate their wives (only roughly equivalent to cruelty). Sexual problems rank low on both lists, leading Goode to conclude that "as every serious survey has shown, sexual problems do not form any large proportion of the 'causes' for marital disruption" (p. 118). Relatives, similarly, are seldom a major factor in marital failure save at the very beginning of marriage.

Thinking in specific percentages would be dangerous, but we can perhaps illuminate this list of causes further by classifying them in terms of our prerequisites for personal relations: compatibility, skill, effort, and support. Compatibility is lacking in divorces involving personality clashes, authority problems, sexual incompatibility, and conflicting values. Skill,

in the sense of the ability to play a responsible role in life, seems deficient in cases of immaturity, drinking, gambling, and "helling around." Lack of effort is implied by financial problems, irresponsibility, and desertion. Finally, external support is contraindicated in cases of adultery and interference from in-laws.

In view of the fact that neither lawyers nor divorcées are scientific experts in marital diagnosis, the previous material must be recognized as merely suggestive. Some day social science will give us a more definitive list of causes for divorce.

### THE PREVENTABILITY OF DIVORCE

A significant but unknown percentage of divorces could be prevented by more careful mate-selection processes. Better compatibility testing, courses in preparation for marriage, premarital instruction and counseling, and legal waiting periods prior to marriage offer possibilities for reducing the number of divorce-prone marriages. Once such marriages take place, however, many of them are so destined to failure that no amount of effort on the part of the couple or a whole panel of experts could salvage them. In extreme cases (the doctor married to the strip-teaser, the old man and the teenager, the rich girl and the chauffeur), everybody knows they are fools except the couples themselves.

On the borderline, however, between unworkable marriages and compatible ones are marginal cases where divorce is not inevitable. Sometimes the waiting period between the time a couple file for divorce and when the case comes to trial is sufficient to produce second thoughts about the impulse to break-up:

I've been doing quite a lot of thinking, and I've decided divorce wouldn't be such a good thing. I wouldn't want to have some stranger taking care of my baby because he'd probably feel like he had two mothers. I really enjoy being with him so much I'd feel pretty bad about having to go work. I've been disappointed with Paul's low income but I'm afraid divorce would mean even less money and more expenses.

An increasing number of states require waiting periods in the hope that reconciliations will occur spontaneously. A few communities take advantage of this interval to see what can be done to engineer reconciliations. Particularly in cases where children are involved (over half the total), referral to a county marriage counselor may be mandatory. Late as it is, such counseling salvages enough marriages to warrant enthusiasm on the part of courts that have tried it. Were professional help made available even sooner, its therapeutic value would be correspondingly greater.

In general, then, some divorces can be prevented by the combined

efforts of the partners and their professional counsel. However, where mate-selection goes awry, marital failure is sometimes inevitable, and divorce provides an opportunity for a fresh beginning.

## Remarriage

When divorce rates are low, those few who end their marriages are treated as outcasts. Divorced women in particular are looked upon as social waste products, condemned to lives of heterosexual solitude or vice, their eligibility for marriage permanently destroyed.

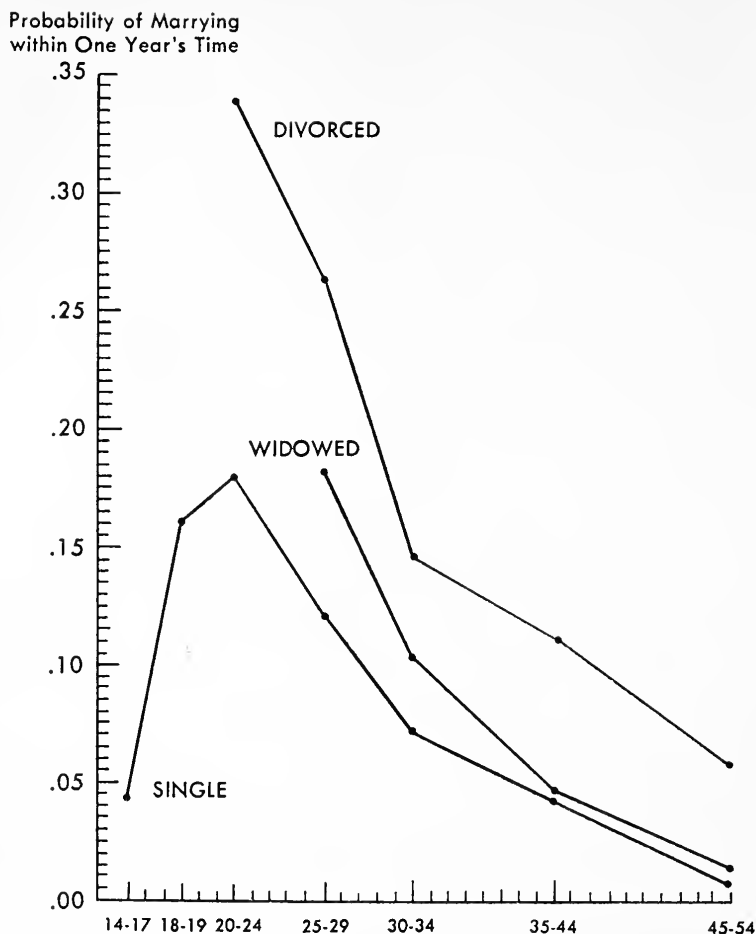
When divorce becomes as common as it is now in the United States, attitudes inevitably change. No society can ostracize 20 per cent or more of its citizens. With disapproval of divorced persons weakened, the taboo on remarriage also weakens. Moreover, the existence of so large a pool of previously married persons provides ample opportunity for inter-marriage within the group despite the residual aversion of the non-divorced. Such factors create high rates of remarriage after divorce.

### THE INCIDENCE OF REMARRIAGE

In both the United States and England three-fourths of all divorced men eventually remarry and two-thirds of all divorced women (Glick, 1957: 139). Although these rates are not as high as the proportion of the population who ever marry at all (over 92 per cent), nevertheless at any particular age divorced persons remarry more often than confirmed bachelors enter their first marriage (see Fig. 11-3).

The picture given for women in Figure 11-3 is identical with that for men. In any age bracket divorced persons are the most apt to remarry, bachelors and spinsters the least likely to do so, while widows and widowers fall between. These data suggest that divorced people are strongly motivated to remarry. Certainly there is no reason to believe they are any more eligible than those who lose their first mate by death. If anything, they are usually less eligible because of the personality characteristics that contribute to marital failure. Nevertheless, divorced persons want desperately to marry again in order to find the satisfactions they missed the first time. Widows and widowers have pleasant memories to live on, but divorced people have only unpleasant memories, hopefully to be erased by remarriage.

To be sure, eligibility as well as motivation affects chances of remarriage. As Figure 11-3 shows, the younger the divorcée, the better her chances. Indeed one study showed that the typical divorcée's chances of remarriage remain better than fifty-fifty until she is forty-five years old,



Adapted from Glick, 1957: 139.

Source: Current Population Surveys, 1950-53.

**Figure 11-3. Probability of Marrying, by Age and Marital Status, for American Women**

whereas for widows the turning point is thirty-three and for spinsters thirty (P. Landis, 1950).

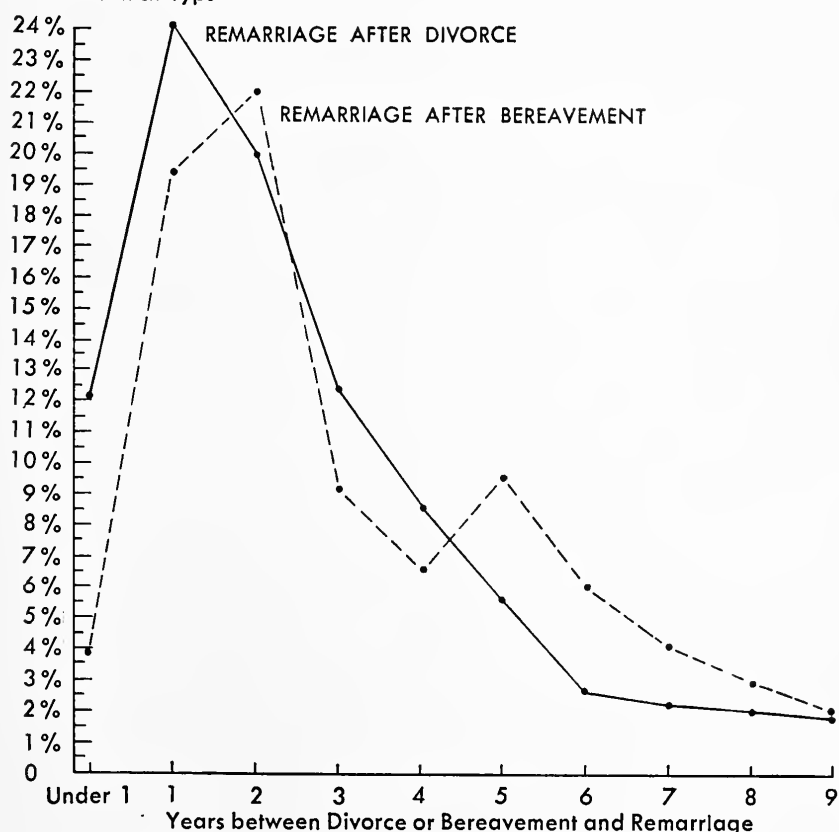
Eligibility for remarriage is higher for high-status people with good incomes and educations (the kind least likely to divorce in the first place). Divorcées with children need to remarry in order to solve their financial and child-rearing problems. They succeed, age for age, in doing so almost as well as divorcées without children, suggesting that children are only a slight handicap as far as eligibility is concerned (Glick, 1957: 136-38).



The net effect of these motives is that if remarriage is ever to follow the first one, it tends to come in rapid succession. Figure 11-4 shows the interval between marriages for men and women who remarried in the early 1950's.

For postdivorce marriages the median interval is 2.7 years, for post-bereavement marriages, 3.5 years. The slower speed for the latter reflects the taboo on remarriage before one year after bereavement out of respect for the memory of the loved one. Divorced persons, by definition, have no such respect. Moreover, their first marriages normally end in separation many months before the divorce decree is final. Where extramarital affairs motivate divorce, courtship for the new marriage may even precede the termination of the old one (though not all partners in adultery

Percentage of All Remarriages  
of Each Type



Adopted from Glick: 1957: 139.

Source: Current Population Surveys of remarriages occurring 1950-53.

**Figure 11-4. Interval between Divorce or Bereavement and Remarriage**

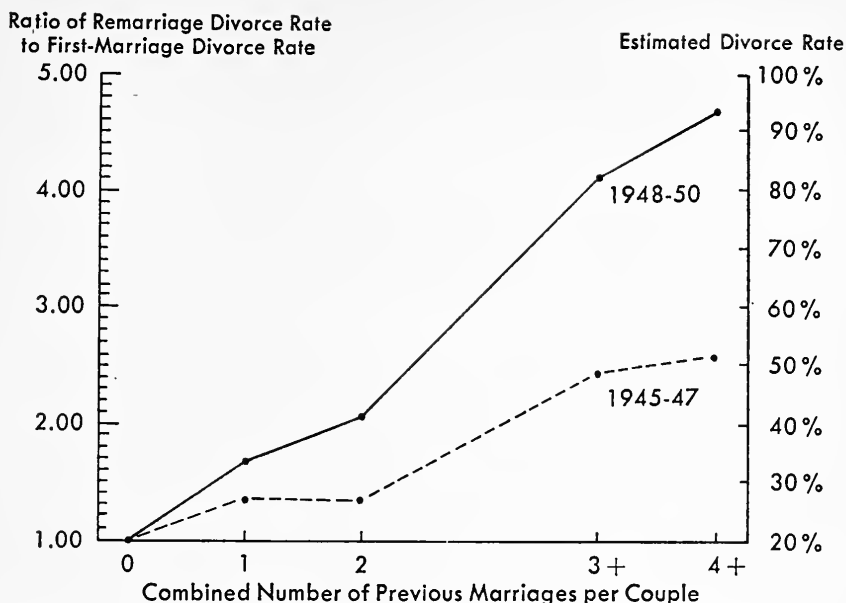
can count on such a *dénouement*). Given their headstart, it is surprising that remarriages after divorce don't eclipse postbereavement remarriages more than they do.

#### THE SUCCESS OF REMARRIAGES

There is little reason to question the success of postbereavement marriages, but postdivorce marriages are another matter. Given the fact that 100 per cent of their first marriages failed, by sheer chance alone we would expect some of the latter group to do better in mate-selection the next time. When we add to this the maturity gained from the lapse of nearly a decade between the beginning of the first marriage and the second, and the wisdom gained from previous experience, we would expect even more second marriages to succeed. On the other hand, some divorced people are incapable of making a go of marriage with anyone. The dregs of these may not even try to marry again (or at least not find a willing partner). Of those who do marry again, the unfit constitute a growing proportion with successive marriages. Hence, the over-all success rate declines when first marriages are compared with second marriages, third marriages, and so forth.

Unfortunately, no longitudinal studies have followed given cohorts of the American population through their marital careers. Hence it is necessary to draw inferences from cross-section data about the comparative success of first marriages and remarriages. Many studies show that remarriages are overrepresented in the divorcing population. Figure 11-5 is based on one study in one state in the drastic years following World War II. Interpolated from Monahan's data, it shows the comparative prevalence of divorces involving remarriages (after divorce and bereavement combined), using divorces following first marriages as a base line. Although the size of the correlation differs, in both periods the larger the number of previous marriages, the greater the likelihood of divorce. Disregarding the confounding presence of the few postbereavement remarriages, this finding illustrates graphically the increasing proportion of divorce-prone partners in multiple remarriages.

The data on the right hand side of Figure 11-5 make possible a crude estimate of the probability of divorce in remarriages. If we assume that the divorce rate in first marriages in the United States is somewhere around 20 per cent (plus or minus 5 per cent), we can infer from the Iowa data that some 30 to 40 per cent of all remarriages end in divorce if each partner has only one previous marriage, whereas some 60 to 90 per cent are likely to end in divorce where each partner has had two or more previous marriages. A conservative interpretation would be that a majority of first remarriages succeed whereas a majority of subsequent remarriages do not. To put it another way, the average divorcing Ameri-



Adapted from Manahan, 1952: 287.

Source: Statistics on number of marriages and number of divorces far state of Iowa by number of previous marriages, 1945-47 and 1948-50.

**Figure 11-5. Probability of Divorce, by Combined Number of Previous Marriages per Couple**

can apparently gets a second chance at a successful marriage, but success on the third round is unlikely.

For the United States as a whole the number of people who ever go beyond a second marriage is extremely small. Hence our main concern is with second marriages as such. Not only are most of these stable in the sense of avoiding another divorce, but also the individuals involved are usually delighted with the contrast between the new marriage and the one that failed. For example, 87 per cent of Goode's remarried divorced mothers found their new marriage "much better" than the first one. Almost as many felt their experience in the first marriage had made the second one easier (pp. 331-36).

*Preparation for Remarriage.* If divorced individuals are to get the maximum educational benefit from their previous marital experience, professional tutoring is needed. Just as children from unhappy homes need "remodeling" in preparation for marriage, so graduates of unhappy marriages need remodeling too. "Divorce counseling" with a skillful professional can help the individual explore the reasons why his marriage failed. Realizing the likelihood that remarriage will occur in the future, the client can explore the qualities to look for in a new partner and the

means of making remarriage work. Later on, "pre-remarital" counseling may serve the same purpose if divorce counseling was not utilized.

With life as short as it is, and the second chance likely to be the last, remarriage after divorce deserves an extra measure of preparation. Given such preparation, the chances of finding a satisfactory partner and building a rewarding second marriage are better than fifty-fifty for most divorced people.

# *Decision-Making in Marriage*

Chapter 9 dealt with the resolution of role conflicts and Chapter 10 with accommodation to tremendous trifles, both of which occur chiefly at the beginning of marriage. Once settled, role accommodations set the pattern for the remainder of the marital career. Decision-making too assumes a certain shape, labeled the "power structure" of marriage. But more than role and personality accommodations, new decisions must be made throughout the family cycle. Hence the need for more detailed discussion of the process by which decisions are reached. In most marriages decision-making works reasonably well. Where it doesn't, marriage counseling offers potential assistance in breaking marital deadlocks and improving decision-making skill.

## The Power Structure of American Marriages

"Power structure" means the relative influence of the two partners in allocating resources of time, energy, money, and facilities. It includes, therefore, both the couple's influence over each other as persons and their unilateral areas of influence in family operations. Types of power structure will be described first, followed by the determinants of the balance of power.

Power may be wielded equally or unequally in marriage. Equality involves either sharing all decisions equally ("syncratic" power) or making an equal number of separate decisions ("autonomic" power). Inequality traditionally yields dominance to the husband, but wife-dominance sometimes occurs as well.

Syncratic, autonomic, husband-dominant, and wife-dominant are the four possible types of power structure. They are ideal types, seldom found in pure form but useful categories for pigeonholding marriages that differ in degree from one another.

Contemporary American marriages are highly equalitarian in practice (Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 23). Especially at first, couples tend to be syncratic, talking over major decisions and arriving at mutually satisfactory solutions. Even then, however, some aspects of marriage are controlled autonomously, especially minor or routine decisions linked to sex roles in the division of labor. For instance, the husband almost always makes the final decision about what job to take since that's "his own business," while the wife makes most of the food purchases and petty housekeeping decisions.

The longer a marriage exists, the greater the tendency for decisions to be made unilaterally. This is one form of estrangement in marriage. Just as husbands and wives talk less about the day's events, so they talk less about decisions to be made, leaving more and more matters to the partner with the greater interest. Since family affairs are the wife's specialty, this means not only a shift from syncratic to autonomic decision-making but also to some extent to wife-dominance. Wives seldom seize power, but husbands often withdraw from decision-making save in areas of special concern to them.

#### DECISION-MAKING PATTERN AND THE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

The fact that new marriages are syncratic suggests that this power structure should be the most satisfactory kind. Table 12-1 shows that this is indeed the case.

**Table 12-1—Wife's Marital Satisfaction, by Decision-making Pattern**

	DECISION-MAKING PATTERN			
	Syncratic	Autonomic	Husband Dominant	Wife Dominant
Wife's marital satisfaction	5.06	4.70	4.64	4.40
No. of families	120	187	120	91

Adopted from Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 258. Source: Representative sample of Detroit wives, 1955.

In general, the greater the sharing in decisions, the healthier the marriage, and vice versa. Unilateral decision-making may be quick and easy, but it is liable to allocate resources contrary to the wishes of the uncon-

sulted partner. At the same time failure to maintain communication with the partner constitutes a form of estrangement:

Unlike most of our neighbors, ours was a definitely patriarchal family. For example, social invitations were always referred to daddy before the reply was given, final permission for our going places was granted by him, and it was he who took care of the serious disciplining. A few years ago, he decided he wanted to move, and with very little family discussion and despite our criticism, he bought a new house. Once he had made up his mind, mother accepted the fact without more ado since she knew it was hopeless to oppose him.

However, it is not so much nonconsulted wives of dominant husbands as "deserted" wives left with the responsibility of making decisions all by themselves who are least satisfied with their marriages.

Marital decision-making at its best is not only equalitarian and shared but also mutually deferent. Decision-making should involve not so much conflict-resolution through give-and-take bargaining as an altruistic willingness of both partners to go more than half way in meeting the other's wishes. Buerkle (1961) finds that well-adjusted wives have "deference and respect for the husband's judgment," while well-adjusted husbands show "respect and deference for the personal feelings of the wife." To be sure, under such circumstances, the final decision is often a fifty-fifty compromise, but the willingness of both partners to concede more than half the battle means that solutions are arrived at generously rather than grudgingly.

#### SOURCES OF POWER IN MARRIAGE

To some extent the balance of power between husband and wife is influenced by their philosophy about marriage roles. Especially at the beginning, their behavior is shaped by preconceptions about how decision-making ought to be handled. In the long run, however, pragmatic factors have more effect on the balance of power. These include the various resources the partners bring to marriage. Partly they are supplied by prior experience. The remainder are determined after marriage by the extent to which the partners go out into the community to tap resources relevant to the decision-making process.

*Mate-Selection and the Balance of Power.* Chapter 2 describes individuals who need to dominate and others who need to be submissive. When such people enter complementary marriages, the balance of power is determined by their combined personality characteristics.

Just how dominant a given individual is depends on the situation. The man who would be equalitarian with a vigorous wife might play a domineering role if matched with a clinging vine. Hence the balance of

power in any given marriage cannot be predicted from the personality characteristics of either partner alone but only in combination.

Blood and Wolfe report two specific background characteristics that affect the balance of power: (1) whichever partner is better educated tends to make the most decisions, and (2) whichever partner is older tends to wield the most power (p. 38 and *passim*).

Formal schooling provides a fund of knowledge and of communication skills rarely equaled by those who quit school early. As a result, better educated wives tend to dominate their husbands, and better educated husbands to dominate their wives. Especially where one partner has been to college and the other has not, the latter is likely to feel inferior and unsure of himself. As a result he is more deferent in decision-making situations.

Although differences in education of as little as a year or two noticeably affect the balance of power, differences in age must be bigger to be significant. Since the average husband is several years older, meaningful age differences are correspondingly skewed. In the Blood-Wolfe study, husbands eleven or more years older and wives four or more years older differ significantly from the intervening range. In extreme cases older husbands have a father-daughter relationship to their wives. Having lived longer, they have more savoir-faire and sophistication, so that their wives look up to them and depend on them. Conversely, older wives tend to mother their young husbands, taking care of them and wielding the main strength on the marriage scene.

In general, then, any advantage in previous experience and training that gives one partner greater knowledge, skill, and self-confidence, tips the balance of power in his favor.

*External Participation and the Balance of Power.* The die is not entirely cast at the beginning of marriage. How actively the husband and wife participate in the outside world also influences the resources they bring to the "bargaining table."

The most tangible resource is money. If the husband alone is working, the higher his income, the greater his influence in major economic decisions. Above \$10,000 a year, decisions about investments, real estate, and employment become so complex and delicate that the average wife leaves them up to her husband's judgment (Blood and Wolfe, p. 31).

Where income is derived from each partner's earnings, the balance of power is correspondingly altered. The more the balance of participation in the economic system shifts in the wife's direction, the more the husband's power declines (see Table 12-2).

It would be a mistake to assume that shifts in the balance of power are primarily a reflection of economic bargaining power. Occasional husbands or wives, it is true, say "It's my money, so I can do with it what I want," but only at great cost to marital solidarity. Normally, family



**Table 12-2—Husband's Power, by Comparative Work Participation of Husband and Wife**

	WIFE NOT EMPLOYED			WIFE EMPLOYED		
	Husband Overtime	Husband Full Time	Husband None	Husband Overtime	Husband Full Time	Husband None
Husband's mean power	5.62	5.28	4.88	4.50	4.46	2.67
No. of families	195	218	25	44	57	3

From Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 40. Source: Representative sample of Detroit wives, 1955.

income, whatever its sources, goes into the family exchequer to be distributed according to the family's needs.

The chief contributions of economic productivity to family influence seem to be psychological and social. Psychologically, a hard-working and successful man or woman gains self-confidence and skill in managing affairs. Socially, he gains prestige in the eyes of the partner who echoes the community's recognition of his success.

The crucial evidence that the balance of power is not determined purely economically comes from two noneconomic forms of external participation. Blood and Wolfe find that the balance of power also reflects whichever partner belongs to more organizations and which ever goes to church more often (p. 39). Thus, psychological and social resources can be derived from voluntary community activities similar to those gained through paid employment. Conversely, stay-at-home husbands or wives tend to be relatively inactive in major decisions.

Emphasizing *major* decisions is necessary because routine household decisions are often delegated to the stay-at-home partner. Influence over housekeeping activities often decreases for wives who go to work (Blood, 1962). In general, the balance of power reflects not only the resources but also the interest of the two partners in topics under consideration.

## The Process of Making Decisions

Decision-making is a critical skill in marital interaction. Most individuals master it sufficiently in the course of growing up to be able to concentrate on the content rather than the method of dealing with a particular problem. Clumsy individuals may have to pay more attention to the nature of the process.

Whether the participants realize it or not, problem-solving requires a series of progressive stages. Bales and Strodtbeck (1951) observe that small groups move from problems of orientation through problems of evaluation to problems of control as they struggle to make decisions. Changing only one term, we shall analyze the process in terms of orientation, evaluation, and execution.

## ORIENTATION TO THE ISSUE

Usually the existence and nature of a decision to be made are crystal clear to both partners. Sometimes, however, one partner is unaware that an issue exists or not entirely sure what the nature of the issue is. Under such circumstances a preliminary orientation is necessary.

*Recognizing That an Issue Exists.* Joint decision-making (the kind of greatest concern to a book on marriage) requires the active involvement of both partners. In rare cases an issue may beg for attention but encounter resistance from both partners. Especially issues that imply deficiencies in the marriage may be unconsciously denied by insecure couples. This is often the case in families that produce schizophrenic children: "deviations from the family role structure are excluded from recognition or are delusionally reinterpreted" (Wynne, *et al.*, 1958). Such "pseudo-mutuality" blocks rational decision-making from the very outset.

More often, one partner has a concern first and must decide whether to bring it to the attention of the other. Usually the answer is affirmative, but under certain circumstances silence is wise. Chapter 10 suggested, for example, that tremendous trifles may be better suffered in silence than harped upon if there is little chance that the offensive behavior can be changed.

However, it is difficult to hold one's tongue cheerfully. It requires a good deal of maturity to handle the irritation involved, and there is danger of displacing the tension into covert aggression, making matters worse instead of better. Though the following situation is hardly trifling, it illustrates the hazard involved when unexpressed issues are transmuted into hidden aggression, this time in the form of resistance to commands:

My husband is a regular slavedriver. He believes everyone should work hard, but he is never satisfied and never appreciates what I do. Often I have a terrific urge to walk across the room and slap his face, but I don't dare. I don't really do anything to get even with him, except that I do unenthusiastically the things he asks me to do.

Where grievances are severe and important, holding them in is hardly likely to improve things. Tension has a way of building up until it explodes either outwardly against the partner or inwardly in the proverbial ulcers or asthma.

If the partner is perceptive, tension is likely to be detectable. Once noticed, it is frustrating not to be able to come to grips with the real issue if knowledge is deliberately withheld:

I took to Loren because of his calmness. It seemed to be a good balance for my excitableness. I've discovered since we've been married, though, that this means he'll go into his shell and not talk to me for a week. I never can find out the reason for his sulkiness until he finally gets over it. It's pretty

exasperating to know he's got something against me but not be able to do anything about it since I don't know what it is.

Contrast the frustration in the previous case with the sense of progress in the following:

Both Sue and I had to learn to speak what was on our minds to each other. We had both been taught it was not right to inflict your problems on others, but we had to "unlearn" that principle so as not to shut the other partner out. We also found that by talking our problems out, we not only felt better, but sometimes the problems would sort of solve themselves when they were out in the open.

In general, then (save for exceptional circumstances where conflict-resolution seems clearly impossible in advance), issues are better raised with the partner than left to fester beneath the surface.

Given the principle that it is ordinarily wise to raise issues openly, what are the best strategies? The chief danger is attacking the partner's ego. Direct criticism causes trouble. The attacked partner mobilizes his defenses and the war is on. Instead of focusing constructively on the problem at hand, the quarrel ranges far and wide into irrelevant side issues and exaggerated innuendos. Or else the accused spouse retreats into his shell to nurse his wounded pride. In either case the couple are no closer to dealing with their problem than before. In fact, increased defensiveness and despair may have strengthened their resistance.

Though criticizing the partner is liable to boomerang, the alternative need not be circuitous. Rather, the object of attack needs to be shifted from the other person to the problem itself. The more objectively and impersonally a problem can be tackled, the easier it is to get started. Orientals are not the only ones who need to save face. Instead of saying "I don't like the way you are treating me," an objective approach would be "Something is wrong with our marriage."

Even this may be dangerous for couples prone to personal vindictiveness. On the surface, objective problem-posing looks like personal criticism. Until problem-solving skill and experience have been acquired, some couples take this initial step only with fear and trembling:

Every time I start to bring up a problem my heart begins to pound and I get all jittery. I'm so afraid Newt will think I'm just griping, I suppose after we've been married longer I'll get more self-confidence about telling him when I think we need to work on something.

For supersensitive spouses and problem areas, more roundabout approaches may work better. For example, the "personal problem approach" begins with the phrase "I have a problem, dear." The apparent objective is to consult the spouse on an individual matter. Hence he does not find his defenses bristling but his sympathy aroused. "What is it, dear?" is his natural response. As it gradually appears that this is not an

individual problem but one the "consultant" is vitally involved in, he can perceptively acknowledge his involvement ("This isn't just your problem—it's our problem."), and can generously offer to do his part to help solve it.

Even more roundabout and correspondingly less belligerent are such methods of dropping hints as giving the partner an article to read or talking about someone else who has the same problem. Again, such tangential approaches test the partner's detective skill.

These may seem like deceitful approaches. They are intentionally indirect. But they aren't attempts to put something over on the partner. Used honestly, they can pave the way to mutually satisfactory solutions. For couples with a history of defensive reactions, circuitous approaches enable facing issues more easily.

The converse of the responsibility for expressing issues tactfully is the partner's responsibility to take them seriously. Occasionally he may be too busy with more important matters. But chronic rebuffing creates barriers to marital understanding, no matter how legitimate the excuse:

At the store I have to listen to the customers' troubles all day—it's part of my job. But when I get home, I don't want to hear my wife tell me everything that's gone wrong. If I just find more trouble when I get home, it's too much. I'm getting to be a nervous wreck.

Few wives are likely to accept with equanimity the notion that they matter less than customers. Marriage is supposed to be more, not less, rewarding than business. If marriage is to achieve the qualities of personal relationships, there may be occasions when issues are not pressed but few indeed when overtures from the partner are rebuffed.

Resistance to hearing out the partner's grievances is primarily a male vice. For the wives interviewed by Terman (1938: 99), selfishness and inconsiderateness are the most widespread criticisms of husbands, and only husbands are accused of failure to talk things over.

The chief consequence of masculine imperturbability is feminine nagging. For Terman's husbands, this is the chief complaint about wives, but they have only themselves to blame. Husbands who take issues seriously the first time they are raised don't have to hear them repeated in an exasperated tone of voice. It is only when husbands dodge problems that they invite a continuing barrage of needling. To prevent such cycles of hopeless pestering and irritated defensiveness, it is only necessary to move into the central phases of decision-making.

*Analyzing the Nature of the Issue.* Like knowing that an issue exists, the nature of the problem is often obvious to all concerned. But not always.

Some problems are hard to pin down because they are embarrassing. Sexual inadequacies often go undefined for squeamish couples. Occasionally, sheer ignorance of sexual terminology handicaps effective communication. More often, the words are known but too emotionally loaded.

Similarly, personal hygiene is a matter the advertisers say "your best friend won't tell you about." Being married to the best friend doesn't make telling any easier.

Misleading cues are also common. Symptoms often mask the basic difficulty. Nagging and complaining—no matter how much they may be blamed for marital unhappiness—are never the root of the problem. They are simply attempts to cope with basic difficulties. Moreover, what may be a fundamental issue in one marriage may be a symptom in another. Sexual frigidity is sometimes the basic problem. But sometimes it reflects the wife's underlying dissatisfaction with marriage. Similarly, some couples say money is their problem. Yet others thrive on the same income. Locating the fundamental problem sometimes takes real sleuthing.

If couples know *when* their bad feelings cropped up but not exactly *how* the trouble originated, it may help to rehearse the sequence of events:

Lucy and I both love books. So when we got married, we decided to put enough money in the budget for one book a month. Last month when we went to pick out our book everything seemed to go wrong. Both of us seemed disappointed about what should have been a pleasant expedition. After we got home, I said to her, "Let's go through the whole evening over again and see where we went off the track." So right there in the living room I pretended to go into the store and look around, all the while saying out loud what my thoughts had been at the time. Then Lucy did the same. It finally became clear that the crux of our problem lay in my desire to browse around and leaf through a lot of books whereas Lucy wanted to find out whether they had certain books she'd already heard about, buy one, and then run home to start reading it. We haven't decided yet how to get together next time, but we're both relieved to know what the trouble was.

Soliloquizing is a technique adapted from role-playing which brings out into the open hidden assumptions and reactions.

Thinking is the best way to analyze an issue. It is promoted by leisurely *ex post facto* discussion between husbands and wives after tempers have cooled and crises have passed. It requires searching for repetitive patterns of difficulty and noting similarities between sensitive areas of marriage and sensitivities in childhood. With the diligent use of intelligence, the puzzle should eventually resolve itself—if not in talk then in action. Sometimes experimentation with alternative hypotheses proves which was the correct diagnosis. If one solution doesn't work, then another possibility deserves to be explored. Ordinarily, however, the nature of the difficulty can be understood first, paving the way to more knowledgeable decision-making.

#### EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION

Once the issue is clear, decision-making can progress from orientation to evaluation. This includes discovering what courses of action are open,

evaluating their comparative utility, and making a final choice among them.

*Proposing Possible Courses of Action.* The chief pitfall at this stage is incomplete work. Instead of considering all possible courses of action, only a few are thought of. As a result the best solution may be overlooked.

Characteristically, each partner has a preconceived answer. The fact that other answers may exist tends to be forgotten. If both partners happen to have the same idea, they are even more likely to settle on it immediately, regardless of its merits. If the TV announcer just made a persuasive plug for a small loan company, shorthanded couples are apt to forget that less expensive alternatives are available.

If neither partner has a ready answer, the advice of friends or relatives may be sought. There is no loss (and considerable potential gain) in outside consultation, provided it does not limit the exploration process.

Preconceptions and friendly advice are logical starting points but illogical ending points for solution-proposing. The goal should be to canvass the territory completely.

Couples usually combine proposing with evaluating. As soon as one solution is proposed, they discuss its pros and cons and consider adopting it. Only when a given solution looks doubtful do they begin scavenging for another one.

With luck this system works well enough. To guarantee best results, more attention may need to be paid to canvassing alternatives as a separate step. Couples inclined to bog down in arguments about the merits of each proposal may need to hold off evaluation until all the possibilities are out in the open.

Writing down proposals guarantees that no ideas will be lost in the shuffle when evaluation begins. If evaluation is postponed, the initial order of alternatives depends simply on the accident of popping first into someone's mind. Contributing potential solutions gives both partners a sense of involvement in the final decision. More importantly, it adds new dimensions to the list of potentials. Mutually satisfactory decisions can be achieved only when the ideas of each partner are expressed.

Postponing evaluation of alternative proposals is difficult. Each partner must curb his reactions to the other's suggestions. In ordinary conversations comments are made spontaneously. Yet these must be inhibited if a separate listing process is to be adhered to. Such rigidity is unnecessary for couples able to approach their problems objectively. But stiff neutrality at this phase may make the difference between successful problem-solving and just another explosion for high-tension couples.

*Evaluating the Alternatives.* If there is only one way out of a problem situation, no alternatives exist to be weighed against each other. So decision-making can move forward to the execution phase.

Wherever two or more courses of action are open, the first task

is to see how they compare. What should they be compared with? First of all with each partner's system of values. Since a value system is hierarchical, it offers possibilities for ordering the alternatives from top priority to least preferred. After each partner has done this in his own mind, the rank orders can be compared to see how much agreement exists. Low-priority items can be abandoned and attention concentrated on each partner's top recommendations for action.

Some choices in married living have such complex ramifications that both partners feel ambivalent about the alternatives; that is both may see gains and losses whichever alternative is chosen. In such dilemmas decision-making may be expedited by jointly listing the values involved. For example, husband and wife might produce the following evaluation of a job offer in another city:

*Values Gained*

1. Higher salary
2. More challenging job
3. Greater opportunity for promotion
4. City with more cultural advantages
5. We may never have another chance like this
6. Being closer to our relatives
7. Getting away from that gossipy Mrs. Henry

*Values Lost*

1. Not seeing the tulips bloom
2. Moving expenses
3. Kids changing schools in mid-year
4. Loss of friends for the kids and for us
5. Leaving our home
6. Pulling out of our organizational responsibilities
7. Have to spend more time commuting

In other situations, the problem may not be to choose between values to be achieved but between means of achieving them. For example, husband and wife may agree on the need for a new car, with the choice lying between brands, models, and so forth. In such circumstances evaluation may require research and experimentation. Reading up on the subject, talking to others who've faced the same problem, and consulting with experts may be fruitful sources of information. Firsthand experimentation sometimes yields information no amount of study could give. In choosing a car, reading up in *Consumer Reports* helps a lot, but road-testing the top brands may reveal even more vividly their advantages and disadvantages.

Once the list of gains and losses is complete, the couple can settle down to the weighing process—discussing both how likely and how important each consequence may be. In considering a change of jobs, moving costs must be compared with the salary increase, the husband's job satisfaction with the wife's regret in parting with her friends, and the like. Totaling up such gains and losses is not easy, but the weight of various factors gradually emerges.

One pitfall is evaluating proposals in terms of "right" and "wrong."

The trouble with these labels is that they are too simple and too abstract. Moreover, they confuse the evaluation process and the decision-making process. Calling one proposal "right" is just another way of saying, "This is the answer I choose." Premature decision-making shortcircuits the evaluation process:

Last week Ken and I were making plans for our vacation trip and he suggested that we write some of our friends and ask if we could spend the night with them. I felt pretty strongly that it wouldn't be right to do that and I told him so. He wanted to know why not, so I told him it was just the wrong thing to do.

Ken has a right to feel frustrated at this point. Arguing that something isn't right because it is wrong is not only circular but also too vague to be grappled with. Concrete effects on the feelings of the wife herself, on the prospective hosts, or on their friendship are the kinds of considerations that would contribute tangibly to evaluating this proposal.

*Selecting the Best Alternative.* At the end of the evaluation process may lie consensus; that is, the partners may agree on the best answer to their problem. If consensus is achieved, no separate decision needs to be reached. When one proposal stands out above all the others, the die is cast.

When consensus doesn't result from a first round of evaluating, it may be hoped for by putting off the attempt to decide between alternatives. As long as there is a tug of war between partners, consensus is impossible. Once tension relaxes between them, agreement may unexpectedly appear. "Sleeping on it" often gives new perspective to both partners so that the next day each may say to the other, "Maybe you're right after all." In their business meetings members of the Society of Friends find that meditation helps the "sense of the meeting" to emerge. Similarly, between husband and wife time out may be the most direct avenue to consensus.

Consensus usually involves agreement on one of the original alternatives. In other circumstances the differing preferences of the two partners may be integrated in a creative synthesis which achieves the values of both. Not every dilemma lends itself to such creativity, but this is the goal to be sought in situations important to both partners.

Reverting to our mobility dilemma, let us suppose that initially the husband wants the new job but the wife wants to stay where she is. *Simple consensus* would involve one partner's becoming convinced that the other was right so that both agreed that one alternative was preferable, all things considered. On the other hand, a *creative consensus* might take the form of agreeing to stay in the hometown but search for a new job there. If a promising opening could be found, the husband's vocational values could be achieved at the same time that the wife's domestic values were safeguarded.



If both partners' values cannot be achieved through consensus, three alternatives remain: accommodation, compromise, or concession. Voting is useless in marriage since it would always be tied.

*Accommodation* resembles creative consensus since it enables each partner to achieve his own goal. The difference is that consensus synthesizes separate alternatives into a mutually approved common package. Accommodation, by contrast, represents agreement to disagree. Both alternatives are put into effect, but each applies only to the advocate partner. Each individual pursues his own goal unilaterally, regretting his failure to persuade the partner to join him in his preferred endeavor.

Accommodation to a mobility opportunity might see the husband move to the new city while the wife and children remain behind. The drastic implications of a split family illustrate the strain accommodation imposes. Less extreme (but still stressful) accommodations characterize interfaith couples who maintain their separate faiths.

A *compromise* is a solution midway between the partners' preferences. Neither partner achieves all he wanted nor does either lose everything. In black and white situations no intermediate alternative may be possible, but if shades of gray are available, equalitarian couples prefer this method of selecting among alternatives.

Typical interfaith compromises include Unitarianism for Jewish-Gentile couples and Episcopalianism for Catholic-Protestant couples. Contrasting with such *halfway compromises* are *sequential compromises* in which couples alternate between the preferred courses of action, achieving each partner's goal half the time. For example, they may take turns going to each other's churches or alternate between preferred leisure-time pursuits.

Compromising has the virtue of maintaining companionship between the partners whereas accommodation separates them. Yet in matters like religion compromise is anathema. In other matters, compromise may be impossible. Moving halfway to a new job would hardly do, nor could a husband take turns working at a new job and the old one.

When neither consensus, accommodation, nor compromise is possible, the only way out is by *concession*. One partner must lose all while the other gains all. The only issue involved is who should do the conceding. Five different approaches are possible. The concession may be forced, voluntary, rational, or delegated either to outsiders or to chance.

*Forced concessions* place the greatest strain on husband-wife relationships. Whether the husband threatens to beat his wife or to deprive her of money, or she badgers him verbally or deprives him of sex, victory is costly to the relationship. Low-status marriages often utilize forceful methods, which is the reason authority problems are a major cause for divorce in the lower class (Goode, 1956).

Force is not always external. Stubborn unwillingness of one partner

to concede eventually forces the other to do so. The result is hardly worthy of being called voluntary, however:

My husband is the stubbornest man you ever saw. I wanted to visit my folks this Christmas and he wanted to go to his. We argued for weeks about it until finally I suggested we draw straws. But he'd have none of it. He said we were going to his home or he wouldn't go anywhere. Finally, I gave up. I figured if he was going to be that pigheaded about it, I couldn't win.

Buerkle's research emphasizes that well-adjusted couples are mutually willing to make concessions. Where intermediate solutions are possible, such willingness produces the dual concessions of compromising. Where one-sided concession is the only form available, both partners may compete for the privilege of making the other happy. *Voluntary concessions* are based on the desire of the individual to be unselfish, to meet the partner's needs, regardless of the intrinsic merits of the case.

In equalitarian marriages the partners are equally willing to concede. In husband-dominant marriages the wife is quicker to concede than her husband. Though husband-dominance sometimes rests on force, more often it reflects genuine deference to the husband's opinions. Under such circumstances the wife's conceding is just as gracious as an equalitarian couple's mutual eagerness to please each other.

If both partners are equally willing (or unwilling) to concede, other factors must be invoked to tip the balance. *Rational criteria* may provide an answer:

1. Are the partners equally involved in the situation? If one feels more strongly about his proposal, perhaps the nod should go to him.

2. Will both partners be equally affected by the decision? If the issue is whether to buy a tank-type or an upright vacuum cleaner, the fact that this tool is used primarily by the wife means her preference should have greater weight.

3. Are both partners equally well informed on the subject? If Bill has a green thumb but Mary is a greenhorn at gardening, Bill should have more influence in determining which variety of corn to plant.

4. Whose turn is it to win? Taking turns works wonders among three-year-old children and may do the same for three-year-old marriages. If the wife has made the most concessions in recent weeks, it would be good for her morale to have her way this time (other things being equal).

If the couple remain deadlocked, can someone else cast a vote to break the tie? Labor and management sometimes agree on an *impartial arbiter*; why not husband and wife? This rules out most relatives, since they're apt to be biased in favor of their own side of the family (or are at least suspect in this respect). A mutual friend may be asked for his

reaction to the problem. Or a professional consultant can be brought into a domestic controversy. He will undoubtedly prefer reopening the evaluation process to making an out-of-hand decision. If eventually he finds it necessary and proper to cast the deciding vote, by then the couple will understand the steps by which he has arrived at his suggestion.

Sometimes the pros and cons of two alternatives are so evenly balanced that it doesn't make much difference which way the decision goes. Under these circumstances, a *flip of the coin* may be the quickest exit from the dilemma.

Regardless of the basis for concession the losing partner deserves commiseration from the winner. Small-group research shows the crucial role of "integrative" activity, for concern with hurt feelings in restoring group solidarity in the face of difficult decisions. So words of appreciation and sympathy will repair the marital bond.

#### EXECUTION OF THE DECISION

Evaluation is the key phase of the decision-making process. However, execution is not a purely automatic consequence.

*Putting the Decision into Action.* One advantage of syncretic decision-making is that active participation in the process of making a decision creates a greater sense of responsibility for and involvement in carrying it out. Decisions arrived at by group discussion are more likely to be put into practice than concessions derived from being lectured to or otherwise externally manipulated (Lewin, 1953). No matter what the decision-making method, however, the execution phase presents new possibilities for difficulty.

Trouble can result from expecting immediate and complete compliance. Although in some cases the required action is simple enough to be carried out at once, if it involves deep-seated habits or complex new skills, individuals with the best intentions may be able to learn only gradually.

Experiments with rats and other animals show that it takes time to learn new tasks. At first, performance is poor. Only gradually does it approach perfection. Rarely is perfection itself achieved. Usually the learning curve levels off just short of perfection with random errors continuing to mar the picture.

Though human beings can do more complicated things than rats, we are just as subject to lapses in memory. Much as the husband may want to remember to take out the garbage, he is likely to forget when his usual schedule is upset, he doesn't feel well, or the boss comes to dinner.

The execution phase of problem-solving requires patience and tolerance. Occasional errors are to be expected. When they happen, it's more

useful to concentrate on mopping up the consequences than on punishing the violator.

Sometimes a plan of action includes safety-valve alternatives to be used in emergencies. The following couple recognized that their preferred plan would not always work, and knew what to do when circumstances demanded flexibility:

Five-thirty has been such a hectic time in our house that Arlene and I decided something had to be done. From now on I'm supposed to relieve her of the responsibility for the children so she can concentrate on the cooking. Days when I feel too tired to cope with the children myself, I'll tell her and we can work out some other plan. Maybe on those days I'll do the cooking myself.

*Reviewing the Decision in Operation.* When alternatives are being experimented with in order to gain firsthand knowledge of their implications, reviewing their operation comes automatically. The only problem involved is how much time is required to give each a fair trial. If the period is clearly understood in advance, griping during the trial can be avoided:

Leonard's family always read the Bible aloud after breakfast. In mine we preferred silent meditation. When we first got married, we agreed we'd try both methods and see which we liked best. The trouble was that we never did give my approach a sympathetic test. The very first day Len made some remark about it being "barren and unstimulating," whereas I think if he had been willing to stick it out a few days longer he would have begun to discover its value.

Even supposedly final decisions may have unanticipated consequences. Silent meditation might look good in theory, but in practice the noise of the family upstairs could prove too distracting.

Even more likely are changing circumstances that decrease a solution's adequacy. Change is the chief characteristic of the family cycle. With the arrival of children comes an inevitable breakdown of old behavior patterns:

Gracia and I made a big thing out of meal times. At dinner we'd have candlelight and silver and read to each other the letters we'd received from mutual friends. One Christmas when the mail was running heavy, we began to be vaguely aware that our reading wasn't getting across as well as it had before. Finally we realized that the baby was getting old enough to want his share of attention. We decided right then and there never to try to read mail at meals again—at least not until the children grow up and leave home.

## Rational and Irrational Decision-Making

No couple's decision-making methods ever look as neat as the outline presented in this chapter. Instead of a logical sequence of stages, couples jump around from phase to phase, not finishing one and skipping

over the next. In living together over the years, couples learn to solve their problems with astonishing ease. Mere awareness that a problem exists may enable an empathic spouse to alter his behavior enough to solve the problem with hardly a word spoken. Couples build up repertoires of habits, skills, and memories that are called upon automatically when new issues arise. Thus condensed versions of the decision-making process are abundantly satisfactory for partners able to read between the spoken lines.

Interaction that is primarily rational can absorb a lot of petty irrationality without being undermined. Attempts of one partner to influence the other by little digs, sarcasm, and innuendo can be effective if the couple's relationship is solid and resilient. Subtle or not so subtle moves, such as asking leading questions or leaving newspaper clippings in strategic locations, can be taken in good humor if the couple are not already on tenterhooks.

The best indication whether problems are handled successfully is not how rigorously the outline is followed, but how the couple feel at the end. If one partner feels gypped, snubbed, insulted, or resentful, something is wrong. The right methods employed in the right spirit should leave both partners feeling contented, no matter who "wins" or "loses" the decision.

#### CONDITIONS FOR RATIONAL DECISION-MAKING

Decision-making works best within the context of a vital personal relationship. Hence we can summarize most of the conditions for rational decision-making under the familiar concepts of maturity and love, plus a new one—concentration.

*Maturity.* Marital decision-making works better when both partners are mature, because they are less defensive about the past, their own proposals, and the partner's counterproposals.

Nondefensiveness about the past makes it easier to apologize for past behavior and to accept apologies from the spouse. Willingness to admit past mistakes and to ask for forgiveness clears away buried resentments which otherwise create barriers to understanding and add tension to new grievances:

At the first party we ever went to as husband and wife, Julian spent the whole evening talking to an old girlfriend of his. It's true he hadn't seen her for years, but there I was stranded among his friends who were all strangers to me. I was so unhappy I could hardly keep from crying, and I've never forgotten how thoughtless he was.

Buried resentment has two repercussions on marriage. It creates barriers between husband and wife that diminish their feeling of unity. It also is fuel for the fire of subsequent troubles the couple may get

into, providing irrelevant gripes to sabotage the machinery of problem-solving.

No matter how remote in the past a resented incident may be, it still needs dealing with. The only solution is apology and forgiveness. For people who hate to admit they are wrong, apologizing is an agonizing process. For a spouse who has been badly hurt, forgiveness may be equally difficult. Whichever act comes first does not matter. Logically apology precedes forgiveness. But psychologically many a spouse who is forgiven first finds it that much easier to apologize.

Mature egos have an inner security that enables them to be more adaptable in decision-making situations. Less easily threatened, they can afford to be more flexible in compromising or making concessions. They are correspondingly less apt to hold out indefinitely for their own pet proposals, creating unbreakable deadlocks which bar the way to mutually agreed-upon courses of action.

Well-developed egos are less touchy and vulnerable. Hence they are less inclined to misinterpret the partner's proposals as personal attacks, less apt to bog discussion down in defensive counterattacks. As a result, attention can be focussed on objective issues rather than distracted with emotionality.

Locke (1951: 192-204) finds happily married couples significantly more mature than divorced couples in all three ways: (1) less defensiveness in current interaction helps happily married couples to *get angry less easily*. (2) Less defensiveness about the past helps them *get over anger more quickly*. (3) Less defensiveness about their own preferences enables them to "*give in*" *more often* in arguments (not being stubborn) and to be correspondingly *less dominating*; that is, they do not press their own opinions and ideas ruthlessly on the spouse. Locke summarizes the three elements under the general heading of "adaptability," which is therefore one of the major ways in which maturity facilitates decision-making.

*Love.* The three elements of love—sex, companionship, and care—make distinctive contributions to rational decision-making.

Since unsolved problems destroy the sense of intimacy, sexual attraction provides an incentive to getting problems solved. Companionship provides both a framework of interaction within which communication is easy and opportunities for expressing issues and for listening to them. Couples who spend time together because they value each other's company take time for decision-making, too.

Caring about the partner makes for greater adaptability. Mature people may be adaptable in general, but they are especially eager to make concessions to those they love. In this sense caring moves beyond mere flexibility into altruism, that is, desire to promote the welfare of the partner through generous allocation of limited resources. Caring pro-

motes generous decisions through empathy. Less wrapped up in himself and more concerned with the partner, one who cares becomes more perceptive of the partner's wishes and hence eager to find solutions that will enable the partner to achieve them.

*Concentration.* Concentration means both focusing attention on the issue at hand and devoting energy to its successful resolution. One of the commonest pitfalls in decision-making is getting off the track of the argument, going off on tangents, forgetting the original issue. The problem can be seen in bull-sessions which wander will-o-the-wisp from topic to topic as different members have their say. The solitary human mind has chain-reaction processes too, which some schools of psychotherapy exploit in "free association" on the analytic couch.

For fun or for therapy, unstructured peregrinations are useful. But decision-making requires more discipline. It requires the equivalent of a discussion leader to keep the group focused on the issue to be resolved and rap the knuckles of those who intentionally or unintentionally would lead the group astray. Some marriage partners are better discussion leaders than others, but basically the marital dyad needs self-discipline from both partners to keep an issue in focus until it is resolved. One-issue-at-a-time is a useful rule for productive decision-making.

Concentration, to the exclusion of other activities—particularly those of a distracting nature—is also needed. When an issue arises, it will be settled more expeditiously if the paper is laid aside, the TV turned off, and all other attention-seducing devices throttled. The more concentrated the energy devoted to orientation, evaluation, and execution, the sooner the process will be completed.

#### CONDITIONS FOR IRRATIONAL DECISION-MAKING

In every case the converse of the three previous conditions impedes the progress of decision-making. Immaturity leads insecure individuals to fib about mistakes, attempting to hide from their partners the facts of the situation. Satisfactory solutions cannot be derived from incomplete knowledge. Worse yet, fibbing destroys the basis of trust between the partners on which a sense of mutuality rests:

Margaret isn't always honest with me. She gets carried away by her impulses and does things she knows I won't like. Then she won't get around to telling me about it, and we get into all sorts of trouble. For instance, she will charge things at the store without telling me when we don't have enough money in the bank. How can we manage that way?

The opposite of love in marriage is less often hate than simply lack of love. When interest and concern are low, decision-making flounders from lack of information:

One thing I've noticed about happy couples is that they seem to understand how the other partner feels about everything. Clayton has been so reserved that I haven't known how he felt about many things. I've seldom known whether he was satisfied with things as they are and if not what improvements he'd like to see tried.

When love does turn to anger, the "information" given is apt to be misleading:

Chuck has quite a temper. He gets disgusted with himself more than with others but his harsh words used to make me clam up for a good long time. This was our biggest problem and we have solved it. I have learned gradually that what he says under stress is not what he really means and if I do fail him and clam up he has learned to remind me that he doesn't mean what he has said.

For those with sensitive consciences the discovery of hostility within produces guilt feelings and a need to make up with the partner. If the need for reconciliation is too urgent, it may shortcircuit the decision-making process by cutting the time allowed for searching out the best alternative. Superficial resolution of differences is not likely to result in a lastingly satisfactory allocation of resources.

New conditions for irrational decision-making are the intrusion of unconscious factors and the lowering of mental fitness through drinking or fatigue.

*Unconscious Distortions.* For most couples the wife's clothing budget can be easily determined by striking a balance between the state of her wardrobe and the state of their exchequer. Unconscious needs, however, can mess up the problem. Without realizing it, the husband may see her wardrobe as a threat to his need to control the marriage. Every dollar he gives her to spend seems a surrender of power, and every new dress a lure to interest other men in her fading beauty. As a result, he resists the whole idea of a clothing allowance, wanting to be able to veto every sex-appealing purchase. Perhaps he is right. The reason for the wife's eagerness for a major allocation of money may (equally unconsciously) be her desire to control her own destiny, to escape her husband's domination, to appear bewitching in the world of fashion (though she may have her competitive eye on women as much as on men).

Some of the preceding desires are normal values which affect every couple's budgetary decisions. The larger the unconscious motivation, however, the more unreasonable each partner's demands are likely to be. He wants a niggardly figure hardly adequate for one season of the year. She wants a lavish amount which would wreck the whole budget. And with all the unconscious overtones involved, neither one is willing to concede a penny.

If such couples could come to "understand the *meaning* of their difficulties in terms of their deeper needs and desires, they would then be in a



position to work out an intelligent, workable compromise between their conflicting aims instead of obscurely fighting for complete satisfaction of every impulse, however contradictory and realistically impossible" (Levy and Munroe, 1945: 181). Once impulses are understood, they can be dealt with. Insight into one's own impulses and the partner's, though not easy to come by, is worth the effort when decision-making is obstructed.

*Alcohol.* By releasing inhibitions against aggressive remarks, drinking accentuates the danger that discussions may degenerate into quarrels:

Most of our verbal conflicts come in the evening. After we've had our customary after-dinner drinks, my wife and I seem to lose all our inhibitions about what we are saying. The result is that our attacks on each other get very acrid.

The alternative need not be perennial sobriety as long as couples manage to avoid controversial subjects while under the influence of liquor.

*Fatigue.* Some people quarrel only when they are tired. Frayed nerves and shortened tempers make it easy to lose control. Couples who discover that quarreling is fatigue-induced may be able to take preventive measures. Even so arbitrary a rule as an evening curfew beyond which serious discussion is taboo may be a wise precaution.

Some couples take advantage of weekend leisure to tackle problems under optimum conditions:

A few months ago we seemed incapable of settling little disputes. If one or the other of us was tired we got into trouble. We had to find some way of avoiding bringing those disputes to a head by postponing them until we were in the right mood. So I suggested that every couple of weeks we sit down over some cokes and discuss the things that had come up between us in the interval. Now, whenever I start getting critical, all Harry has to say is "All right, hold it until our bull-session!"

For smooth-running marriages, problems are best settled on the spot. But couples plagued by quarrelsomeness may need cooling-off periods. They need to see in turn that postponements do not become indefinite. The promised time for resuming discussion must be respected or new resentment will be created.

## Marriage Counseling—Emergency Resource

Whatever may have caused irrationality, if it is repeated often enough, it begins to feed upon itself. One quarrel leads to another, and the vicious cycle becomes almost unbreakable:

We have emotional outbursts so often that something is going to have to be done or else we should call it quits. They follow a regular pattern. Julie makes some dig at me and I blow up. Since my feelings are hurt I just don't

have anything to say to her for the next few days. She gets irritated at my coolness and then she blows up at the slightest provocation.

Whenever conflict becomes chronic and the partners are powerless to stop it, outside intervention is needed—and quickly—to prevent marriage from being destroyed. Living within the confines of the same house, sharing the same bed, turns love to hate almost inexorably once the cycle of interaction becomes vindictive. When attack leads to counterattack day after day, inner controls are proven inadequate and external discipline must be imported to save the situation.

Less dramatic than chronic conflict but still critical is any significant occasion when the decision-making process breaks down. Whenever a prolonged deadlock develops over a major issue, calling in a third party offers a means of escape from the dilemma.

In general, whenever a couple's own decision-making skills are exhausted, outsiders provide an extra resource for meeting the emergency.

#### THE EXTENT OF MARRIAGE COUNSELING

Of all the personal problems for which people seek outside help, marriage problems are the most common. In Gurin's nationwide sample, only one person in seven had ever sought outside help, but of those who had, almost half had gone with a marriage problem.

More specifically, almost 8 per cent of the *married* individuals in his sample had sought help with a marital problem (Gurin, 1960: 305). Since this is less than half the national divorce rate, a large proportion of divorces must occur without getting outside assistance. If we assume that counseling should always precede divorce (either to facilitate reconciliation or to improve the chances of a subsequent marriage), we must conclude that the incidence of marriage counseling in the United States is much lower than the need for it.

Many people consider seeking help for their marriage problems but never get around to it. An additional 6 per cent of Gurin's married sample reported they could have used help with their marriage problems but that for one reason or another they never contacted a professional person when they were in trouble (p. 347).

*Differential Incidence.* Striking differences appear between the sexes and between social classes in their readiness to seek help when their marriages are in trouble. Table 12-3 shows that at every educational level, more women than men seek professional help with their marriage problems. This coincides with the experience of the Marriage Council of Philadelphia whose caseload in the postwar years 1945-49 was 63 per cent feminine (Mudd, 1951: 77). The director of that agency suggests four factors which may account for this difference: (1) It is easier for a woman to leave her housekeeping for an appointment than for a man to get time

off from his job. (2) Women are less hesitant to admit that they need help. (3) Women have more role conflicts and other adjustments to make in contemporary society. (4) Women have more at stake in marriage since it is often their only career (Mudd, pp. 91-92).

**Table 12-3—Proportion of American Adults Who Ever Sought Professional Help with Marriage Problems, by Education and Sex**

Education	Men	Women	Ratio of Men to Women
Grade school	2.2%	2.4%	.65
High school	4.9	8.4	.58
College	7.4	8.4	.88

Adapted from Gurin, 1960: 193, 328. Source: Representative sample of American adults of all marital statuses (single, married, widowed, divorced) and all ages.

The fact that women clients outnumber men means that wives often seek counseling without the cooperation of their husbands. Less often the reverse is true. As a general rule, marriage counseling works best when both partners are seen. A few agencies refuse to accept clients on any other basis. Most, however, work with the interested partner and hope that the other's cooperation will be elicited. The Marriage Council of Philadelphia reports that "In 65% of our cases, if the client has a good relationship with the counselor, the counseling is reflected on the partner so that he becomes willing to come despite his initial reluctance" (Mudd, p. 63).

Although the participation of both partners in counseling is ideal, counseling for one partner alone may enable her to become sufficiently objective and adaptable to restore the marital equilibrium. No individual in marital difficulty should refrain from seeking outside help because of the unwillingness of the partner to accompany her.

Table 12-3 shows that higher education diminishes the difference between the sexes in using professional help. Almost as many college men as women utilize marriage counseling, in contrast to the greater reluctance of noncollege men. Probably two factors are at work for college graduates: a greater sensitivity to the personal nuances of marriage and a greater appreciation of the value of professional training for help in crises.

The lesser tendency for poorly educated people to seek help with their relationship problems reflects the fact that their lives are preoccupied with more tangible crises (Koos, 1950). Partly as a result of lower income, working-class families are more apt to encounter financial crises. However, their less sophisticated way of life leaves them less sensitive to interpersonal difficulties and less prone to seek help for them despite the fact that their divorce rate is so high. Or perhaps we should put it the other way around—because working-class marriages seldom get help with their relationship problems, they often crack up in divorce.

## MARRIAGE COUNSELING FACILITIES

Where do people take their marriage problems? Friends and relatives are undoubtedly the first (and for many, the last) resort. They are more easily accessible and infinitely less expensive than professional men. Little study has been made of the informal counsel provided by these interested third parties. The fact that they are not disinterested is one of their handicaps, for it prevents them from being as detached and objective as professionals. Nevertheless, friends and relatives are probably the most widely used marriage counseling facilities. Even though their success rate may be low, their aggregate service is probably enormous.

**Table 12-4—Source of Professional Help for Marriage Problems and Other Personal Problems**

<i>Sources of Help Used</i>	<i>Marriage Problems</i>	<i>Other Personal Problems</i>
Clergyman	44%	39%
Doctor	23	31
Psychiatrist	12	17
Marriage counselor	8	1
Other agencies	7	10
Lawyer	6	3
Total	100%	101%

Adapted from Gurin, 1960: 309. Source: National sample of 2,460 adults (married and single).

Table 12-4 shows the resources used by those of Gurin's married respondents who sought professional help with their marriages. Clergymen are the chief resource, exceeding medical men even when psychiatrists and other doctors (mostly family physicians) are put together. The pre-eminence of clergymen and family doctors reflects the on-going relationship most families have with one or both such resources. A clergyman or doctor who is seen regularly for other purposes is readily available when marriage crises arise. Clergymen, moreover, along with marriage counselors and lawyers, specialize in family problems. (Table 12-4 shows that people are more apt to take marriage problems than any other kind of personal problem to these three specialists.) Moreover, nearly all couples are married by a clergyman which makes him seem a legitimate resource in time of trouble.

By contrast, psychiatrists and marriage counselors are relatively rare and seldom known by the average layman. These specialists therefore depend on referrals by other professionals for their clients (Gurin, p. 316). In the case of marriage counselors the public has heard of the specialty and considers it functionally appropriate for dealing with marriage problems yet fails to know of any such person. Hence persons interested in securing marriage counseling bulk large among those who feel they could use help but fail to obtain it (Gurin, p. 348).

*Specialists in Marriage Counseling.* In recent years marriage counseling has developed as a specialty practiced by increasing numbers of clergymen, doctors (especially psychiatrists and gynecologists), social workers, clinical psychologists, family sociologists, and a few lawyers. The American Association of Marriage Counselors is the only national organization concerned exclusively with marriage counseling, which it defines as "a specialized field of family counseling, concerned with the interpersonal relations of the two partners, in which the client is aided to a self-determined resolution of his problem" (Nelson, 1952).

The standards for membership in the American Association of Marriage Counselors are rigorous, including specialized academic training at the graduate or postgraduate level and supervised experience in marriage counseling. Its membership is relatively small, concentrated in the metropolitan and academic centers of the country, and consequently accessible to only a small proportion of the American population.

Far more accessible are the staff members of the Family Service Association of America whose several hundred Family Service agencies can be found in all the larger cities of the United States. Staffed exclusively by social caseworkers, Family Service agencies once catered to families in financial difficulty. With the transfer of financial relief to public agencies, Family Service societies increasingly minister to all sections of the community. Characteristically, middle-class families now pay fees of one to ten dollars per interview. Such fees, based on the family's ability to pay, reduce the feeling that going to a social agency is "depending on charity." Though not limited exclusively to marriage counseling, these agencies are a most important source of such help. Unfortunately they often limit their services to residents of the area covered by the United Fund Torch Drive or Red Feather campaign which subsidizes them.

#### COUNSELING PROCEDURES

Given the interprofessional nature of marriage counseling, its practitioners' methods vary widely. While no surveys show which methods are most popular, they range all the way from the most neutral, nondirective, client-centered counseling to highly activist counseling such as Albert Ellis' "rational psychotherapy" (1958). Some marriage counselors emphasize childhood personality development whereas others concentrate exclusively on the present. Some focus on inner feelings while others stress overt behavior. Some recommend spontaneity, others planfulness, and still others try to avoid making any recommendations. In short, the methods used depend on the particular counselor's training, experience, and philosophy.

Nevertheless, some generalizations are fairly safe. A typical counselor

spends much of his time listening to the client. Occasional questions help stimulate self-analysis. From time to time he may interpret meanings and connections the client seems ready to understand. He may reassure the client about the value of expressing negative feelings in the interview situation. He may support the client in his desires to try a new course of action.

Rarely, however, does the counselor take over responsibility for deciding what the client should do despite requests to do so:

*Client:* My doctor sent me over here to see you. My husband and I are considering getting a divorce. I was glad to hear about you because I want to find out whether that is what we should do.

*Counselor:* I'm glad you have come because it often helps to talk about the marriage before getting involved in legal procedures.

*Client:* How soon do you think you can have an answer for us?

*Counselor:* It's impossible to tell just how long it will take for the best course of action to become clear, but it will certainly take several interviews. As you and I talk over your marriage, you will gradually get a better idea of what you want to do.

*Client:* You mean I have to decide for myself?

*Counselor:* That seems to work out best. But talking it over with me should help you make up your mind.

Marriage counseling is usually nondirective to the extent that the counselor seldom writes a prescription for the marriage. His primary function is to help the client clarify his intentions in the light of his feelings, desires, and values.

*The Time Required.* Such clarification takes time. Interviews usually last 45 to 60 minutes, once a week. Premarital counseling may require only a single interview. Where interpersonal tensions are involved, it takes longer to overcome them. Some agencies average as little as two or three interviews per case, but this often reflects client difficulties in finding time and transportation, plus personal resistance to baring one's soul. Five to ten interviews are more likely averages where genuine marriage problems are involved and the counseling is carried through to a satisfactory conclusion. If a chronic quarreling pattern has developed or personality disturbances are involved correspondingly more time is needed to heal past wounds and reconstruct a marriage on a healthy footing (Mudd, 1951: 257-325).

*Joint Counseling.* Marriage counselors sometimes meet with both partners. Such joint sessions may be preceded by individual sessions where each partner can express his hostility safely and clarify his attitude toward the marriage. After that, threesomes help restore communication between the partners and provide opportunities for mutual decision-making in the restraining presence of the counselor.

Although a few agencies oppose joint sessions, most marriage counselors prefer a flexible policy, with the same counselor handling both

partners (unless their mutual suspicion and hostility is too great) and holding joint sessions when couples are ready for them (Saul, 1953).

Marriage counseling is handicapped by the interpersonal nature of the difficulties involved. Gurin reports that individuals with marriage problems find their professional help less useful than those with any other kind of personal problem (see Table 12-5). The reason apparently is that mar-

**Table 12-5—Helpfulness of Therapy for Marriage Problems and Other Personal Problems**

<i>Helpfulness of Therapy</i>	<i>Marriage Problems</i>	<i>Other Personal Problems</i>
Helped, helped a lot	52%	71%
Helped (qualified)	14	17
Did not help	34	12
Total	100%	100%
No. of cases	133	174

Adapted from Gurin, 1960: 318. Not-ascertained cases omitted. Source: National sample of adults.

riage partners often blame each other for their troubles and fail to seek help for their own role in the marriage. In Gurin's study those who blame someone else for their troubles are helped least of all, those who see their problems as mutual somewhat more, and those who stress their own involvement are helped most of all (see Table 12-6).

**Table 12-6—Helpfulness of Therapy, by Client's Perception of Locus of Problem**

<i>Helpfulness of Therapy</i>	<i>PERCEIVED LOCUS OF PROBLEM</i>		
	<i>Self</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Other</i>
Helped, helped a lot	75%	60%	52%
Helped (qualified)	15	14	16
Did not help	10	26	32
Total	100%	100%	100%
No. of cases	71	97	77

Adapted from Gurin, 1960: 318. Not-ascertained cases omitted. Source: National sample of adults.

Partly the lesser effectiveness of marriage counseling is inevitable. Since marriage is a social system involving a network of interlocking role behaviors, it cannot be changed as easily as individual personality problems can be solved. Nevertheless, Gurin's findings have certain practical implications for marriage counselors and their clients. For counselors, they suggest the value of involving both partners in counseling so that change can be initiated at both ends of the marital dyad simultaneously. In recent years a growing number of clinicians have called for progress in this direction:

. . . the clinician faced with an unhappy husband and an unhappy wife must look beyond the neurosis of the individual to the disturbance within the relationship itself. . . . Diagnosis of one without the other is impossible, and treatment of one without the other can multiply problems rather than alleviate them. Marital crisis is seldom the result of one partner's disturbance. (Ackerman, 1958: 158.)

For clients, the implication is that as long as they focus on what's wrong with the partner, little progress is likely to be achieved. Since the individual controls only himself directly, he must search for ways in which he can improve his own behavior, confident that once he becomes a better husband or wife, the spouse is likely to respond positively.

Despite these handicaps, marriage counseling proves worthwhile to a substantial proportion of those who avail themselves of it. Table 12-5 shows that two-thirds of those with marital problems found their contacts with clergymen and other counselors helpful. Similarly, experts analyzing seventy cases from the files of the Marriage Council of Philadelphia judged that 60 per cent made some progress during counseling, 33 per cent remained the same, and 7 per cent got worse despite the counseling (Preston, 1950).

#### THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MARRIAGE COUNSELING

Some of the possible contributions of counseling to marital functioning include therapeutic intervention to create the conditions of rationality, training and encouragement in rational behavior, and mediation of particular disputes.

*Therapeutic Intervention.* Whenever the conditions for rational decision-making are missing, counseling must begin by creating them. Insight into the effects of unconscious distortions, the development of maturity, and the restoration of love require substantial work with the individuals involved. While counseling is advantageous with both partners, it must often be done separately before they are ready to interact jointly without too much tension. This is the most time-consuming form of marriage counseling, overlapping as it does with other forms of psychotherapy. If it is successful, it may enable the couple to take over responsibility for their own decision-making without further counseling.

*Training and Encouragement.* Sometimes a breakdown in decision-making stems not from emotional or psychological difficulties but from deficiencies in technique or effort. Under such circumstances, joint counseling enables couples to practice their decision-making skills under the counselor's watchful eye. Like an athletic coach, the counselor can point out inadequacies in method, demonstrate better ways of operating, and provide moral support for continuing efforts when the "players" get tired and discouraged.

*Mediation.* Relatively rare in American marriage counseling but



common in some foreign countries like Japan is mediation for couples deadlocked over serious issues. Traditionally, American counselors shy away from giving advice and expressing opinions. However, these are often what clients want. Moreover, in actual practice, Gurin's study shows that advice is the most common benefit claimed from therapy (p. 322). Apparently then, professional ideology to the contrary, expert knowledge and detached judgment are major benefits available from marriage counseling. Given couples with reasonably healthy personalities and sound decision-making techniques, professional mediation should quickly resolve many husband-wife decision-making dilemmas.

# *The*

## *Division of Labor*

The division of labor in the home is concerned with the division of responsibility between husband and wife for the tasks involved in running a home. Marriage is also profoundly affected by the nature of the couple's participation in the division of labor outside the home, that is, in the occupational system. Most conspicuously, the wife's choice whether to work at all outside the home affects family living. Less obviously, the nature and extent of the husband's work affects it too.

### The Division of Labor in the Home

In sharp contrast to the shared nature of decision-making in American marriages is the specialized pattern of task-performance which makes the "division" of labor an apt label. Despite cartoons of aproned husbands with dishpan hands, little change has occurred in the traditional split between men's tasks and women's tasks (Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 50-52). Men still do the heavy outside tasks like shoveling snow, mowing the lawn, and juggling storm windows and screens. They do repairs and carpentry work and keep up the car. Women do almost everything else: cooking, table setting, and dishwashing; dusting, vacuuming, and mopping; washing, ironing, and mending clothes; making beds and picking up the house.

Many masculine tasks are seasonal or intermittent whereas the feminine

ones occur daily or oftener. As a result, the division of labor in the home is very one-sided in terms of time. The wife does most of the work, the husband only a small fraction. The main reason for this one-sidedness is that the husband's chief assignment is away from home. The forty hours he spends on the job prevent him from taking more than a small part in routine household tasks. Conversely a nonworking wife has a large fund of time at her disposal for carrying out her housekeeping assignment.

The particular allocation of tasks between men and women is affected by biological factors. The wife's intermittent child-bearing fits in with the child-rearing and housekeeping tasks, leaving the husband to earn money away from home. The few tasks the husband does around the house reflect his larger musculature and mechanical aptitude (Scheinfeld, 1943). Car-washing, thus, is associated with both the husband's away-from-home traveling and his mechanical interests.

In extreme cases the division of labor is sharper yet, with the husband expected to do nothing at all at home and the wife expected to do everything:

My father was the breadwinner and nothing more was expected of him. Never can I remember his mowing the lawn, filling the stoker, or even picking up his own clothes. Mother felt that housework was her end of the bargain and daddy should not be bothered with it. She felt that while daddy was at home, he was entitled to a complete rest. Each had his own realm and if either stepped into the other's, someone's pride was sure to be hurt. For instance, mother wanted to use her college training and get a job after the children were older but daddy said that as long as he could provide for his family, his wife was not going to work.

Normally, however, the husband's assignment includes the traditional masculine tasks. On the borderline between masculine and feminine tasks are some that are more variable, such as shopping and paying bills. Either sex is physically capable of doing these tasks, and they are ambiguously linked to other marital roles, for example, to the husband's earning money and daily exodus from the home versus the wife's spending money in connection with her food, clothing, and interior-decorating specialties. As a result, many couples share these responsibilities, while others assign them to the husband only or the wife only.

Keeping track of the money and bills is an administrative task closely associated with the family power structure and with the size of the husband's income. The higher his income, the greater the likelihood that he will control the outflow of money, including paying the bills and settling the accounts. Conversely, in working-class families many husbands turn their whole pay envelope over to the wife for careful disbursement.

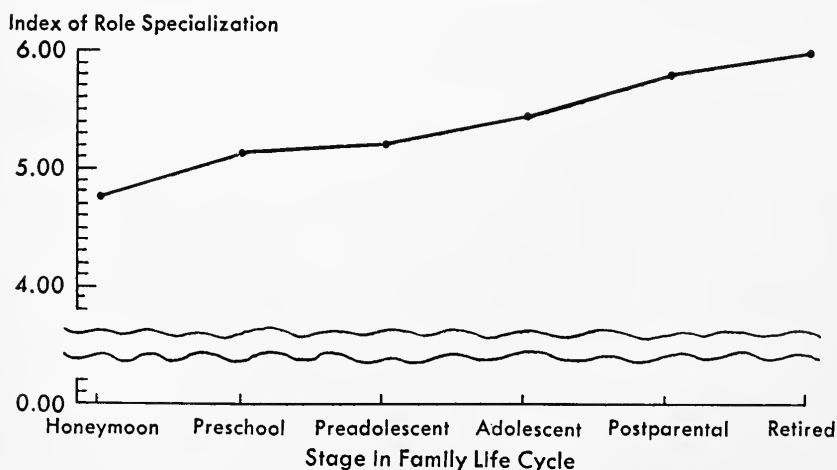
#### SPECIALIZATION IN TASK PERFORMANCE

The division of labor in the occupational system enables the high degree of specialization that is the basis for economic productivity. Does

specialization in the home produce similar efficiency? Probably so for complicated tasks like making pies. But most housekeeping tasks are so nearly drudgery that peak efficiency is soon reached. Hence specialization in family activities may be less a practical than a psychological necessity:

Each of us likes to be autonomous in our own roles. Tom worked for a summer as a camp cook and knows plenty about cooking and yet never criticizes or offers any suggestions about my cooking unless I ask him. Once when I cooked pizza I found out by asking him that he knew a lot more about it than I did. He told me that he wouldn't have said anything and let me use my own method if I had not asked him. Likewise when we bought an out-board motor and he had trouble working it, I didn't offer to help him even though I knew something about it because I felt that it was his role and prerogative and that unless he asked me to help I would not say or do anything.

Perhaps the chief reason for the steady growth of specialization after marriage is neither the inability of both partners to perform the same task nor their respect for each others' feelings but their declining interest in togetherness. At first, keeping house is fun for both partners—especially if they can do it together. After a while, however, disengagement affects housekeeping too. The partners fall into time-worn parallel ruts. The path of least resistance is to work separately, each at his own task. Then there are no arguments about whose turn the garbage is or when they should do the dishes. Then each can work at his own pace at his own convenience, unhampered by the partner's whims. Convenience is gained, though, at the expense of companionship.



Adapted from Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 70.

**Figure 13-1. Role Specialization, by Stage in Family Life Cycle**

The companionship emphasis in modern marriage does not require that *all* housework be done jointly for maximum satisfaction. The most satisfied wives in Blood and Wolfe's study shared less than half the list of tasks measured (p. 259). Nevertheless, husbands who *never* share any tasks have the least satisfactory marriages, even though they may do their own jobs well.

Straus (1960), similarly, finds that good farmers get less help from their wives than poor farmers. The basic pattern on successful farms differentiates the husband's technical work from the wife's "integrative-supportive" and household roles. As in the city the chief characteristic of the division of labor is specialization, modified by sharing to only a limited extent and (as the next section shows) under special circumstances.

#### ADAPTABILITY TO SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The normal pattern in marriage is for the wife to do most of the housework without much help. However, performing this role requires ample time and energy. Should she contract away her time to an employer or lose her vitality to illness, the housekeeping will suffer unless husband, children, or servants come to the rescue. Usually, the husband does respond to such crises, so that the balance of housekeeping shifts with the comparative amount of time at the husband and wife's disposal.

**Table 13-1—Wife's Household Task Performance, by Comparative Work Participation of Husband and Wife**

	Comparative Work Participation					
	WIFE NOT EMPLOYED			WIFE EMPLOYED		
	Husband Overtime	Husband Full Time	Husband None	Husband Overtime	Husband Full Time	Husband None
Wife's mean household task performance	5.81	5.57	5.64	4.66	3.40	2.33
No. of families	198	218	28	50	58	3

From Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 62. Source: Representative sample of Detroit wives, 1955.

The one reversal in Table 13-1 involves retired husbands whose wives are also at home. Under these circumstances, husbands do no more housework than if they were employed full time. The reason for this is:

If the wife is home all the time, she can do her traditional tasks without much help from the husband. Even if he's home full time (as when neither partner works), he is not likely to invade her sphere as long as she is capable of doing her own traditional work. (Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 63.)

The question then is not the relative amount of time available, *provided* that both partners have more than enough time to do their own

tasks. But when time gets short, both partners are pressed into service to the extent of their ability and availability.

Particularly when the wife goes to work, the traditional division of labor must be revised. Then, the wife's time for getting her housework done is so severely reduced that the husband has a moral obligation to take over some of her tasks. How much he can do depends on how much he is home, but do something he must if the household functioning or the wife's health is not to break down. That the wife still carries the major responsibility for housework is suggested by a study of Blood and Hamblin (1958) in which working wives were estimated to do 75 per cent of the housework in comparison to nonworking wives' 85 per cent.

Illness for the wife similarly shifts the division of labor in the husband's direction. Conversely if the husband takes on additional vocational or community responsibility, the wife must adapt to his lessened availability by doing without some of his help and taking over some of his tasks. Such adaptability maintains the balance between the husband's and wife's total roles in life, inside and outside the home.

## The Wife's Occupational Role

Lest it be thought that keeping house is an unattractive role thrust upon married women by tradition and circumstance, note the following description of its advantages as an occupation:

Relatively speaking, the homemaker's job is more varied both during each day and from day to day. . . . The variety of tasks should relieve not only the monotony but also the fatigue and strain. The homemaker, furthermore, since she is both manager and worker, is able to plan her own tasks and is free to lay them aside or to take them up in the order she chooses. She has no boss except the exigencies of the work itself; she need punch no time clock; she can arrange her own rest periods and vacations. . . . Furthermore, the housewife works in her own home with working conditions in the way of light, air, cleanliness, and layout of workroom under her own control. She need spend no time going to and returning from her work. The fact too that the work is for herself and for her family should augment its interest and relieve its tedium. . . . The order, harmony, cleanliness, beauty, healthfulness, and restfulness that she achieves are the product of her labors and hers alone. They are not lost in the contributions of scores of others. (Kyrk, 1953: 278.)

Despite these advantages, housework has liabilities. The more challenging the prehousekeeping role, the starker the contrast:

I had to give up a lot when I got married—sorority life, not worrying about meals, the rah-rah of going to games with a bunch of kids, talking with people about subjects you can get worked up about. Those things are more glamorous than a kitchen. Housework was a comedown after the excitement and stimulation of college.

The two most objectionable features of housework are isolation and lack of recognition. Childless housewives spend most of their working hours alone. Radio and TV are poor substitutes for live companions. Somewhat better are telephone calls to girlfriends. Perhaps most satisfying are friendly neighbors who drop in for midmorning coffee or collaborate on major chores like spring cleaning. Even when exploited to the full, such remedies do not provide the constant interpersonal stimulation of the idealized job.

Isolation is physical as well as social. The converse of not having to commute to work is being stuck within the same four walls day in and day out. Not only is such isolation monotonous during working hours, but also the fact that her leisure time is spent there too means the housewife has the proverbial sense of never getting her housework done. No neat boundary line between work place and leisure place makes complete relaxation possible.

Recognition for housework varies from husband to husband. With a little empathy and effort on his part, the wife may get a good many compliments. More important, she has the satisfaction of knowing she is meeting her husband's needs as she goes about cooking and pressing and sprucing things up for him.

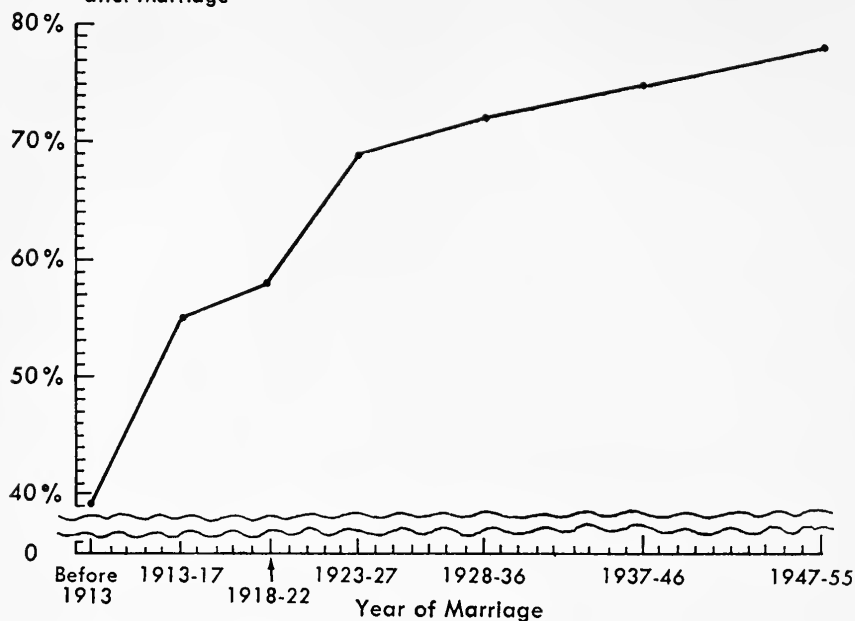
Nevertheless, these rewards are relatively intangible, and the recognition wholly private. Many housewives envy the public recognition, the differential prestige (for successful work), and the monetary rewards given working women. Such envy lies back of the notorious phrase: "I'm just a housewife." Conversely, the desire to have their usefulness publicly acknowledged and to contribute to the family's financial resources motivate an ever increasing number of married women to take outside jobs, especially if the husband's economic contribution is not adequate (National Manpower Council, 1957: 313).

#### THE INCIDENCE OF EMPLOYMENT OF MARRIED WOMEN

The employment pattern of married women is complex, reflecting both the husband's income and the wife's child-rearing responsibilities. To be employed at all after marriage is still comparatively new.

*Historical Trends.* The increase in the employment of married women in the United States has been dramatically rapid. From 1940 to 1955 the percentage of married women working at any one time nearly doubled [from 15 to 28 per cent (Taeuber and Taeuber, 1958: 224)]. Viewed longitudinally, the proportion of wives who *ever* work after marriage has also risen steadily. Even though the youngest women in Figure 13-2 have been married fewer years, a larger number of them have already played the dual role of housewife and employee. During

Percentage Who Ever Worked  
after Marriage



From Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 103.

Source: Interviews in 1955 with wives of all ages.

**Figure 13-2. Proportion of Wives Ever Employed after Marriage, by Year of Marriage**

the balance of their married lives some of those who did not work early in marriage will probably take jobs, raising their lifetime incidence still higher. As a result, the time is rapidly approaching when paid employment will be a practically universal experience at one point or another in the family life cycle. The old taboo on work for married women has been thoroughly demolished. Even wives who don't work nowadays usually feel that they could if they wanted to.

Employment for married women may have become optional in the social sense, but it depends more on the balance of needs inside and outside the home than on the mere aspirations of the mother.

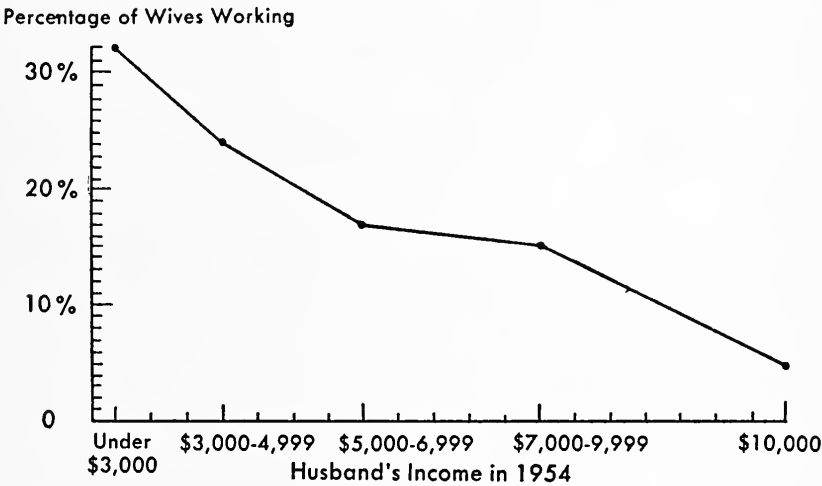
*Economic Necessity.* "Need" is a slippery term, subject to considerable Madison Avenue manipulation. Need is also stimulated informally by neighborhood example. The proverbial Joneses set the pace for everyone else in their circle. Often it is the wife who is most sensitive to neighborhood influence, since this is the world she lives in:

I'm afraid my wife is too ambitious. She never seems to be satisfied with what she has in life. If a neighbor buys a new car, she wants one too; if another changes the wallpaper she must do the same; if a third buys color



television, she must have a better set. So she keeps wanting more and more money to spend every year.

Pressure to imitate and conform is especially strong with objects that are externally visible: the spanking new car which sits at the curb, the aluminum storm doors and windows, the Comanche red tulips. After World War II television aerials spread from house to house like the flu, and Whyte (1954) has noticed that window-ledge air conditioners are equally contagious. Husbands are no more immune than wives to a growing sense of needing whatever luxuries the neighborhood comes to define as necessities. Nevertheless, those segments of the American population whose income is lowest clearly have the greatest need for a second paycheck. So the lower the husband's income, the higher the proportion of working wives (see Fig. 13-3).



From Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 98.  
Source: Representative sample of Detroit wives, 1955.

**Figure 13-3. Proportion of Wives Working, by Husband's Income**

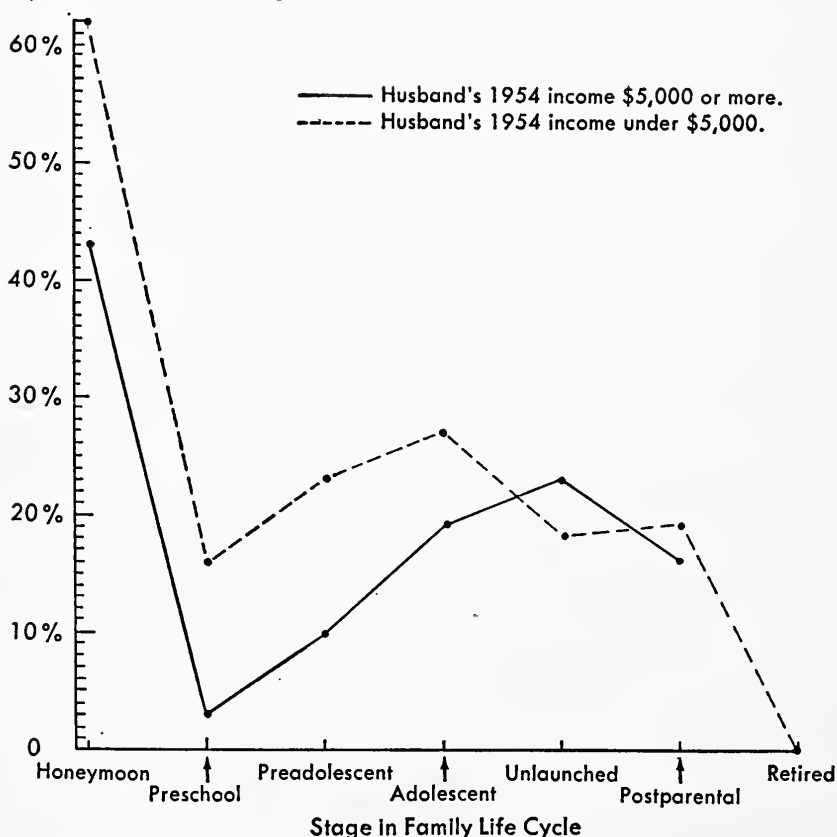
For low-income families, extra money goes for elemental necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter. The higher the husband's income, the more choice the couple have about the use of the wife's income (see Chapter 14) and the more relative the question of economic need. Blood and Wolfe (p. 100) report two ways in which this relativity influences the wife's decision to go to work. (1) If the husband's education is less than her own, the wife is more apt to work to make up for his lesser earning ability. (2) If the husband is downward mobile in comparison to his father (that is, holds a worse job), the wife responds to their

mutual disappointment by going to work. In other words, if the husband alone cannot provide the standard of living the wife expects, she is motivated to fill the gap.

*Freedom from Child-Rearing Responsibility.* However, the wife's freedom to go to work depends on whether she has children living at home. The younger the children, the greater her supervisory responsibility. Where the husband's income is adequate and the children are young, wives have double reason to stay home. Conversely, low-income families without children have the highest proportion of working wives (see Fig. 13-4).

The reversal of the usual relationship between the two income levels at the "unlaunched" stage (that is, where children over eighteen years of

Proportion of Wives Working



From Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 105.

**Figure 13-4. Proportion of Wives Working, by Stage in Family Life Cycle by Husband's Income**

age are still living at home) reflects the tendency at low-income levels for older children to work, thus relieving the economic pressure on the parents. At higher income levels many "adult" children are college students whose tuition fees are met by the mother's income.

The proportion of working wives has been rising fastest in the forty-five to sixty-four age bracket (Taeuber, 1958: 224). This leads Blood and Wolfe (p. 105) to make the following predictions about the emerging life-cycle pattern of the employment of married women:

1. Nearly all wives are likely to work after marriage until their first pregnancy.

2. Very few mothers of preschool children (mostly hardship cases of severe economic necessity) will work even part-time away from their children.

3. When the last child enters first grade, employment will rise sharply and continue to increase until the last child leaves home or reaches adulthood, when employment will reach a second peak. This figure may not equal the pre-child-bearing starting point, since by this time most families have purchased a house and accumulated the major capital goods, diminishing their economic need. However, the increasing proportion of American children seeking increasingly expensive college educations provide a new financial incentive for mothers to work in the early postparental years.

#### THE IMPACT OF THE WIFE'S EMPLOYMENT ON MARITAL SATISFACTION

We have already noted that the wife's employment alters both the balance of power and the division of labor between husband and wife. The wife participates more actively in major economic decisions and less actively in household tasks and their associated decisions. What do these structural changes in marriage do to the feelings men and women have for each other?

Unfortunately, at this writing the answer is available only for wives. If all wives, regardless of economic need, are taken together, working and nonworking wives are about equally satisfied with their marriages (Locke and Mackeprang, 1949; Nye, 1958-59).

However, when the need for the wife's work is taken into consideration, differences emerge. In low-income marriages the wife's marital satisfaction increases if she goes to work. Conversely, in high-income marriages lower satisfaction is associated with working. The most satisfied wives are therefore those who respond to the need to work and those who stay home when there is no need for it (Blood and Wolfe, p. 102). Specifically, these wives are most satisfied with the love and affection they get and the companionship they have with their husbands (Blood, 1962).

The cause and effect relations between the wife's employment status and her marital satisfaction are not entirely clear. We infer, however, that

when wives go to work under economic pressure, their paycheck reduces the strain on the family finances and is appreciated by the whole family as a useful contribution. By contrast, when a wife who has little need to do so works, her absence is resented. The family members dislike the loss of her housekeeping services and of her time generally, since her income has little marginal utility for them. The husband resents having to share her housekeeping responsibilities. Hence, if the husband's income is adequate, few wives want to work unless they are dissatisfied with their marriages or with the normal middle-class role of "hostess-companion." Though employment may be personally satisfying to such women, it further strains the marriage relationship.

Our guess is, therefore, that husbands of working wives are even more sensitive to the need factor than wives are. Low-income husbands presumably feel relieved if their wives rescue the family from perennial financial distress. They may accuse the wife of laziness if she stays home. Conversely, high-income husbands probably resent the loss of the wife's personal services when she goes to work and welcome her greater leisure for companionship and emotional support when she quits.

If we were to add the freedom of the wife from child-rearing responsibilities to this equation, we would expect these differential evaluations to be accentuated. Working mothers of young children are likely to experience personal guilt feelings and husbandly accusations of neglect unless their income makes the difference between starvation and plenty for the children. Only if her economic returns more than compensate for the loss of her daytime presence as a mother can her work be appreciated and family solidarity strengthened.

The impact of the wife's employment on the marital satisfaction of both husband and wife therefore depends on the balance between accruing gains and losses. Do the increased resources for family living outweigh the strains imposed on the division of labor and the loss of leisure? If so, employment is a net gain. But if there is a net loss, even a career-minded wife for whom employment is personally satisfying must weigh her rewards against the costs to the rest of the family.

*Role-Compatible Arrangements.* So far we have paid little attention to the nature of the wife's work, yet this may profoundly determine the effects. For instance, wives with light housekeeping responsibilities may be able to work part time without imposing on the husband at all for domestic assistance. Similarly, school teaching is uniquely compatible with caring for school-age children since mother and children have similar "working" hours and identical vacations.

Highly paid wives may be able to employ full-time housekeepers. Those whose talents are unusual may feel that the family's loss is society's gain (and who is to say whether family or society should take precedence?).

Some wives assist their husbands: nurses who assist the doctors they married, colleagues in research or writing, family businesses or family farms. For them companionship in work offsets the loss of companionship in leisure (since the wife's spare time is eaten up with housework).

Circumstances vary widely. Yet the general pattern suggests that modern wives ideally play a sequence of roles, externally oriented at the beginning and end of marriage, but inwardly focused during the child-rearing years.

### UNPAID EQUIVALENTS

For the externally oriented phases of their lives, paid employment is not the only alternative to housekeeping. If family income is adequate, volunteer positions offer advantages. Whereas part-time employment is difficult to find, volunteers have more flexibility in their working hours. Not only may any degree of involvement be chosen but also there is more freedom for absenteeism when children are sick or other domestic emergencies arise. Moreover, most organizational responsibilities subside to low ebb during summer holiday seasons when family needs are high. In short, volunteer work can more easily be integrated with the role of wife and mother than most paid employment.

Even from the standpoint of the wife's personal satisfactions, volunteer work may match paid work. To be sure, the lack of pay means the rewards are less tangible. But the work itself *may* be more challenging and responsible. Many a secretarial job is just as routine as dishwashing, whereas political campaigning and social service involve rigorous challenges and fascinating insights. The comparison depends, of course, on the kind of work done either for pay or for free. But some of the most provocative and socially important functions are available only to those who have the leisure to work without pay.

Nor should we forget that the supportive roles of middle-class wives in their husbands' occupational advancement are also volunteer roles. Working wives are too busy with their housekeeping to entertain outsiders very often. And the outside contacts that win clients for young business and professional men come primarily through voluntary community activities.

In short, the middle-class wife who chooses not to work during the child-rearing years need not be entirely confined to her home. Though her children have top priority, especially when they are young, she can allocate an increasing share of her time to the community in ways analogous to economic productivity. Given this kind of "occupational" role, she may gain most of the rewards of paid employment with fewer penalties for her husband and children.

## The Husband's Occupational Role

Whereas the wife's occupational role is so optional that it is controversial, the husband's is so universal that it is taken for granted. Only when masses of men are unemployed (as in the Great Depression) do we pay very much attention to whether husbands have jobs. Then we see that the shift from working to not-working is just as crucial for the husband's position in the family power structure as for wives in normal times (Cavan, 1959).

Unemployment is primarily a working-class phenomenon. Since this book is focused on middle-class families, we can take for granted that the husband has *some* kind of job. The nature of that job, however, and the extent of the husband's involvement in it affect the family almost as much as the fact that he has a job at all. His occupation has four major impacts on the family *via*: (1) the resources provided for family living; (2) the conflicts between his occupational role and his family roles; (3) the new experiences to which he is exposed with resulting differential socialization of husband and wife; and (4) the external demands his job imposes on family living patterns.

### RESOURCES FOR FAMILY LIVING

The husband's work is primarily a source of income for the family but at the same time their main source of social status and prestige.

*Money.* Despite the increase in working wives, husbands are still the primary source of sustenance. The adequacy of the family's standard of living depends primarily on how much money he brings home (and only secondarily on how far they can make it stretch).

A few decades ago even city husbands' earnings were supplemented by considerable home production: gardening, preserving, baking, and dress-making. Today, wifely productivity has almost vanished from the urban home and is dwindling on America's more prosperous farms (Blood and Wolfe, p. 82). As a result, families depend more on money than ever before.

In general, the higher the husband's income, the more satisfied his family with their standard of living. Exceptions arise, however, when the husband earns less than his reference group. Even though he earns more than the national average, if the wife's standard of comparison is above average, she may still be disappointed. For instance, certain ethnic groups have high expectations. In Detroit, Jewish wives are not satisfied with Detroit-average incomes but only with Jewish-average incomes (several thousand dollars higher). Similarly, wives who marry down the social scale find their husbands' incomes particularly disappointing (Blood and Wolfe, pp. 109-110).

Most American wives, however, are quite satisfied with their standard of living. Most husbands play their part reasonably well in the total division of labor. They provide economic security for their families and are rewarded with their dependents' appreciation. Only in the lower reaches of our economic system are incomes so low and so unpredictable that occupational inadequacy undermines the husband's position in the family, leaving him a marginal member, apt to desert his family or leave officially through divorce. The higher the husband's income, the more secure his position in the family and the greater their respect and deference, especially in economic matters.

*Social Status.* Money cannot buy quite everything. Even though respect in the eyes of the community is generally correlated with income, there are noteworthy exceptions. Money earned by illegal or disreputable means will seldom buy access to the better social circles. Conversely, families with relatively little income may enjoy a fine reputation in the community because of the husband's professional contribution. The racketeer, to cite an extreme case, may have ten times the minister's income but only one-tenth the social standing.

The major social division is between blue-collar and white-collar jobs. Sometimes blue-collar workers earn more money but rarely more prestige. As a result they are more often dissatisfied with their jobs, an attitude their wives and children do not fail to detect and, usually, to share. Dyer (1956) found that husbands in such unsatisfactory jobs feel their wives are not proud of their work. Wives in turn don't enjoy talking to their friends about their husbands' blue-collar jobs. Although low pay is one element in this dissatisfaction, lack of prestige is an even more sensitive question to the husband himself.

Low morale in the husband affects his relationship to his wife and children. Family relations are undermined because the husband ranks low in the system of social stratification. By contrast, when men hold high-prestige jobs, the family's self-respect is high too. And since the husband's occupation is the primary source of the whole family's standing in the community, he contributes thereby to their social resources for family living. They share his good name and reputation and gain access to circles of friendship that would otherwise be closed.

#### CONFLICTING ROLES: OCCUPATION VS. FAMILY

The resources provided by the husband's occupation do not come free of charge. They must be earned by expending time and energy. Since the average husband works away from home, this is time and energy taken away from the family.

As long as the husband's investment in his occupation is the same as everybody else's, it isn't perceived as depriving the family. Customary

expenditures are taken for granted. But whenever a man spends more time or different time than other husbands, family living is altered. Then the husband is apt to feel torn between the demands of his job and the demands of his family—in short, to experience conflicting roles.

*A Question of Values.* When occupational roles and family roles collide, the couple's hierarchy of values is tested. If they share the same value system, the way out of the dilemma is easy. Even if it is the family role which is subordinated, family solidarity is preserved because the choice is mutual.

In recent years the American value system seems to have shifted. Whereas some years ago there was greater emphasis on occupational values, today the tide is toward family values. Far more college students expect family roles to be their chief source of satisfaction in life than give priority to their occupation (Goldsen, 1960). Perhaps, then, in most marriages role conflict will be resolved in favor of the family:

I purposely chose a job with a company that I felt would not hold the tension and continuous pushing that the big corporations hold. I don't want to come home to my family in the evenings tense from the day's work and preoccupied with my job. Both my wife and I feel that the family should be of first place importance before my job. I intend to do my very best in the engineering field and to strive to progress but not to the point of sacrificing my time and relationship with my family. For example, I will take a lesser salary if it means being able to spend more time with my family or living in a territory where the children are most happy with school and friends and my wife and I are most happy.

On the other hand, if both husband and wife are socially ambitious and eager to rise to the top, family sacrifices seem petty in comparison:

I must admit that I am jealous of the fact that Mel has the luxury of an expense account and travels a good deal, and I do get irritated when he fails to call me and say he'll be late for dinner. But I realize that if he is to progress up the ladder of success, he will have to relinquish some extra time at home in favor of the office. If he gets so engrossed in his work that he forgets to call me, it's a sign he's really putting his whole heart and soul into his work.

But what if husband and wife disagree? Then the husband's devotion (or lack of it) to his work becomes the focus of contention. Pressure for greater occupational involvement may come from either partner. Normally, the husband gives more time to his job than the wife thinks he should. As a participant in the occupational system he is constantly exposed to the influence of its incentives and competition. Faced with conflict between occupational values and family values, he responds to the former for the same reasons wives find working attractive—the tangible rewards and recognition.

Successful business executives reach the top precisely through their willingness to subordinate other roles to the demands of the job. When



Henry (1949: *passim*) describes the successful executive as "a man who has left home," he means the parental home, but he could just as well mean the marital one:

All the successful executives have strong mobility drives. They feel the necessity to move continually upward and to accumulate the rewards of increased accomplishment. . . . All show high drive and achievement desire. They conceive of themselves as hard working and achieving people who must accomplish in order to be happy. . . . The executive is essentially an active, striving, aggressive person. His underlying personality motivations are active and aggressive. . . . This constant motivator unfortunately cannot be shut off. It may be part of the reason why so many executives find themselves unable to take vacations leisurely or to stop worrying about already solved problems.

Whether strong achievement drive is "good" or "bad" depends on the context. For the corporation it is a priceless asset. From the standpoint of the wife it may be a source of pride and vicarious gratification. Nevertheless, it also means the wife is excluded from her husband's thoughts much of the time he is home in body and that he is home relatively little. LeMasters (1957: 295) reports, for example, that the president of General Motors has complete living facilities near his office so that he doesn't have to go home except on weekends.

For wives with high affiliation needs and low mobility aspirations, such occupational devotion is horrifying. They feel neglected, rejected, unloved, unwanted. They pressure the husband to stay home more and take longer vacations. If he accedes to her values, he must sacrifice his own ambitions. If he doesn't she feels sacrificed to the corporation. In either case the tension between job and family cannot be resolved to their mutual satisfaction.

Less often, the ambitious partner is the wife, the familistic one the husband. This combination is even less happy, since the husband is a failure in the eyes of both wife and employer. Such a man likes to escape into solitary fishing expeditions or fraternal lodges to be safe from the wife's nagging. Sometimes he makes half-hearted attempts to please, but since her values are not his own, these efforts are not likely to last long enough to pay off. Even if they did, the compensation in prestige and promotion would hardly seem worth while to him. Indeed, since promotion brings increased responsibility, it only makes such a man feel increasingly trapped.

In neither pattern of conflicting values is there any easy solution. Such couples are poorly matched. Theoretically they should not have married in the first place. The fact that they did means they must endure continuing conflict up to the very day the husband retires from the occupational world.

*A Question of Occupations.* Sometimes the source of tension is not contrasting values in husband and wife but endemic to the job itself. The

source of strain is not the husband's voluntary investment of time in his work but the fixed requirements of the work he has chosen. Some jobs compel him to be away from home long hours or irregular hours, whether he likes it or not.

For example, occupations that serve the public's leisure-time interests upset the normal schedule of family living. Although the wife may adjust her own schedule accordingly, the children's school hours prevent them from having much contact with their father. Even for the parents, not being able to entertain restricts their social life as a couple. Still more difficult to adjust to is employment on a "swing shift" where regular patterns of family life can't be worked out because one week the husband works days and the next, nights.

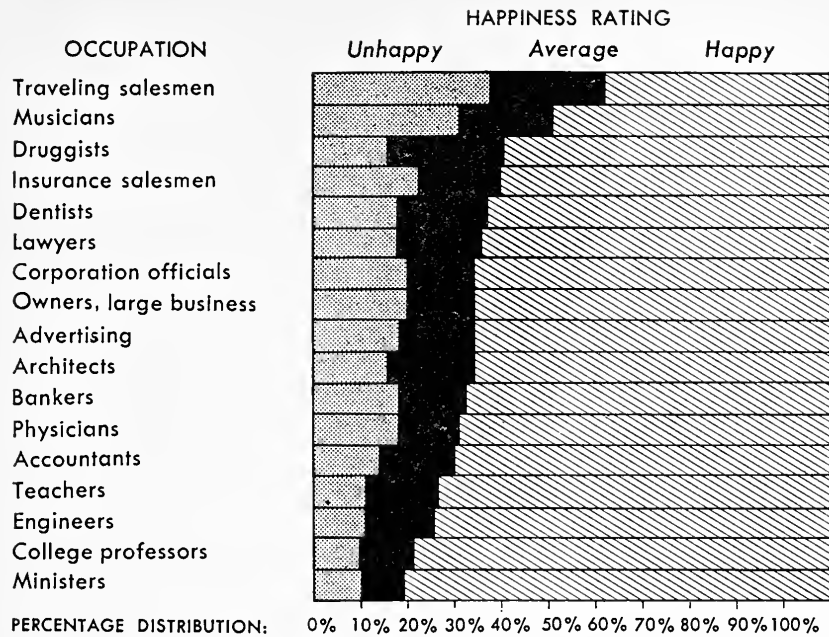
Other occupations require emergency duty outside regular hours. Family plans must always be tentative, subject to last minute interference. While some occupations encounter emergencies routinely, others utilize practice emergencies to remind both sexes that potential conflict between job and family is inherent in the contract:

The commanding officer at one air base organized a duty night, which after two hours of work, turned into a stag party till 3:00 A.M. There were later objections from the wives of officers present, about which the commanding officer said . . . "I called that duty night because that's exactly what it was. There's too much of this dashing for the gate right after a man's shift is over to get home. . . . I wanted to take this means of informing my men that radar comes first, family . . . second. If I, as their CO, want them to stay till three in the morning to work they'll do it. If I want them to play poker till three, they'll do it, because I said so. Let the wives gripe. It's time they found out their husbands are in the Air Force." (Gross, 1953: 372.)

In still other cases it is not the job but the distance between work place and residence that creates strain. As cities grow in size, commuting time increases at the expense of family time:

Being in a relatively suburban residential commuting town, the pace of family living was swift. My father left at seven every morning and returned dead-tired from commuting at seven. The business pressures on him were great and much of his time home was spent with business reports. There was occasional conflict when my brother and I interrupted him with our noise and wrestling. Even when he was home, he seldom had time or energy to be a father to us.

Even more extreme is conflict between family roles and traveling jobs. The notorious jokes and stories about traveling salesmen testify to the unsettling consequences of extensive absenteeism. Just as separation disrupts engagement, so travel undermines husband-wife relationships and creates opportunities for competing personal involvements. Figure 13-5 shows that traveling salesmen's marriages are the least happy of all white-collar occupations.



Adapted from Burgess and Cottrell, 1939: 140.  
Source: Lang, 1932: 53-59.

**Figure 13-5. Marital Happiness, by Husband's Occupation**

Burgess and Cottrell suggest that traveling salesmen get into trouble because they are emancipated from social controls when spending their nights in strange communities away from family and friends. Conversely, ministers face the strictest social control because their behavior is expected to be exemplary. Similarly, teachers and professors are public employees expected to set good examples for their students. An additional favorable factor for ministers and professors is that their schedules are flexible so they can spend more time with their families than men in most occupations.

Although the reasons for some of the variations in Figure 13-5 are unknown and the rank order may have changed since the 1930's, occupations clearly differ significantly in the conflicts they create with family roles. Yet even traveling men have some choice about how they spend their time when they are home. In Nagasaki, I met a Japanese woman who saw little of her merchant marine husband during his annual shore leaves because he spent most of his time with his friends. Contrast this with the following case:

One of the pleasantest memories of my childhood was the Saturday noon luncheon. Because my father's work took him out of town a lot, we saw very

little of him during the week. However, he always arranged to eat lunch with us on Saturdays and then do something special together for the afternoon. This weekly reunion was one of the things my mother, brother and I always looked forward to. We gained a greater feeling of closeness by being with my father under completely relaxed conditions for a few hours. We also worked harder all week so we could make him happy with our accomplishments.

#### DIFFERENTIAL SOCIALIZATION

Another way in which the husband's occupation affects marriage is through experiences that reshape his outlook on life. Insofar as he learns new values and habits, he continues the process of personality development begun in childhood. If his wife is cut off from these experiences, the couple's socialization as adults is differentiated. As a consequence, severe strain may be placed on what had previously been a compatible relationship.

Differential socialization is especially apparent where the husband is socially mobile. Upward mobility doesn't necessarily mean that husband and wife grow apart, but it takes effort to enable the lagging partner to keep up with the changing one. If this effort is not made or is unsuccessful, rapid disengagement may result:

Father started out at the very bottom of the company ladder and has worked his way up to his present position as branch manager. He has never stopped learning, thinking, and developing new interests. Materially, this has contributed to harmony in that my mother has more luxuries than she possessed as a girl. On the other hand, it has contributed to discord in that she ceased development at marriage. While he began moving in new circles, she clung to a small circle of friends and a few outside activities.

Occupational experience opens up channels of unilateral mobility to working wives just as to working husbands. In either case, if only one partner forges ahead socially, a gap is created between the partners:

Mother and dad both started out at the same place since neither of them went to college. But mother has actively striven for self-improvement, spending her earnings carefully, and taking full advantage of the contacts she makes in her work. As a result she has gained higher status than dad and puts pressure on him to keep up with her (which he fails to do). Because of the uneasy feeling between them, both parents avoid entering into outside activities together and rarely do any entertaining at home.

Downward mobility creates even more strain than upward mobility. Not only does social distance develop between husband and wife but also the standard of living falls. Hence there is economic deprivation as well as differential socialization.

Roth and Peck (1951) find that marriage adjustment is poor in both downward mobility and differential upward mobility. In the latter

case strain is more severe where the wife is the mobile partner since she can't confer her new status on her husband as easily as a husband's higher status benefits his wife.

Differential mobility creates mixed marriages out of what were initially homogamous ones. Just as couples from different social backgrounds have difficulty in marriage (especially if the wife's status is higher), so do couples who grow into different social circles.

Although joint upward mobility by husband and wife is never easy, it can be achieved if they make the effort to move forward together. Under such circumstances husbands resocialized on the job can tutor receptive wives in new ways of living (and vice versa).

### OCCUPATIONAL PRESSURES ON FAMILY LIVING

Sometimes, occupations impinge on the whole family by requiring certain styles of living or special places of living.

*Conformity Pressures.* Families in the public eye feel the influence of social expectations on their behavior. The President's family, for example, know no privacy, must always consider what others will think of their every move. On a more modest scale a minister's wife and children are expected to demonstrate high standards of behavior:

We always had to keep the living room in order because Daddy was so particular that it be in perfect condition for anyone who might drop in. Whenever my parents were invited to a member's home for dinner, my brother and I felt that we were greatly wronged to have to always go along. My parents couldn't very well say to the hostess, "My children are very bored eating at your place so we got a babysitter for them." When this type of conflict was at its peak, Freddie and I were very angry with our parents, begrudgingly spoke to them on the day of the engagement, and shattered their nerves by shutting up like clams in obvious disgust when visiting.

Whyte (1952) notes a trend for modern corporations to regulate social competition among their executives by creating detailed norms of family behavior for each level in the organization chart:

One rule transcends all others: *Don't be too good*. Keeping up with the Joneses is still important. But where in pushier and more primitive times it implied going substantially ahead of the Joneses, today keeping up means just that: keeping up. . . . The good corporation wife . . . does not make friends uncomfortable by clothes too blatantly chic, by references to illustrious forebears, or by excessive good breeding. And she avoids intellectual pretensions like the plague.

Children less often but wives and homes very often become instruments of social mobility and occupational success by making the right impression on the right people. In some occupations the right people are clients—actual or potential. In others they are superiors with the power

to advance or hold back a man's career. In either case occupation-derived norms influence the whole family's life style.

*Residential Requirements.* Whyte also notes (1951) that modern corporations expect their junior executives to climb the company ladder via the national circuit of branch plants and offices. This means that successful men must move every few years to a new community. The main burden of moving falls on the wife:

. . . it is she, who has only one life in contrast to her husband's two, who is called upon to do most of the adjusting. The move at once obsolesces most of her community friendships, severs her local business relationships with the bank and the stores, takes her from the house and the garden on which she worked so long, and if the move takes her to a large city it probably drops her living standards also.

Whyte fails to mention the central adjustment for the wife in the domestic division of labor—the necessity of transferring her whole housekeeping operation from one house to another. Modern vans make this less difficult than it once was, but the husband's briefcase or filing cabinet is still more movable than her houseful of furniture, food, and children. Nevertheless, corporation wives find the moving less difficult than its unpredictability. Since neither they nor their husbands determine *when* the next transfer will come, life has an uncertain feeling. The corporation not only prescribes where they will live but also changes the prescription at irregular intervals, placing heavy demands on the family for flexibility and adaptability.

Even more unusual residential destinies befall families in international service. For government officials and businessmen the destinations are usually the capitals of the world, though even capitals may provide unusual environments when they are named Kabul or Lagos. For missionaries and other pioneers, home may be on frontiers as primitive as colonial America's, amid alien ways which challenge the adaptability of wives in keeping house and raising children. Often such locales require shipping children off to distant boarding schools, and even wives may have to leave when conditions become too revolutionary. Marriage ties and parent-child ties in such circumstances are subordinated to vocational commitment. As long as both partners share the same commitment, the balance is counted as gain rather than loss; the wife's sacrifices are her contribution to the husband's occupational role in the family division of labor.

# *Family Financial Management*

Despite the fact that per capita income in the United States is the highest in the world, money is a major source of conflict in American marriages. On the other hand, perhaps the size of American incomes is what causes the conflict. Below a certain level, little choice is possible about how money shall be used. It must all go for bare necessities. As income rises, the range of options widens, giving couples more latitude within which preferences instead of sheer necessity may determine its allocation. Hence financial disagreements (stemming from conflicting values) become more common. On the other hand, if income rises even higher, the necessity of choice diminishes. *Both* partners can have what they want. So financial problems become less difficult. [Blood and Wolfe, (1960: 245) find that financial disagreements are most common among upper-middle income bracket couples, where discretionary income is available but not inexhaustible.]

Table 14-1 shows how salient financial conflicts are when American wives recall the main things they have disagreed with their husbands about. Other studies find the same thing: money is the most common area of conflict between husbands and wives.

Why should this be so? (1) The last chapter mentioned the family's heavy reliance on money to purchase the goods and services they consume, "do-it-yourselfers" not excepted. (2) The division of labor in the family means the husband earns most of the money, but the wife spends

**Table 14-1—Major Areas of Disagreement in Urban Families**

Area of Disagreement	PROPORTION OF WIVES MENTIONING	
	First	At All
Money	24%	42%
Recreation, companionship	16	30
Children	16	29
Personality characteristics	14	28
In-laws	6	10
Roles	4	7
Miscellaneous (religion, politics, sex)	3	5
None, not ascertained	17	17
Total	100%	168%*
No. of families	731	731

\* Total adds to more than 100% because wives could report more than one area of disagreement.

Adapted from Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 241.

most of it, leaving husbands wondering where all their hard work went to. (3) American marriages are equalitarian enough to make both partners feel they have a right to influence major, nonroutine purchases. When discretionary funds are limited, each partner is liable to feel that decisions won by the other deplete his own chances for implementing his values. One-sided power structures may not be any happier, but they have less open conflict over money. (4) Whereas in-law problems are concentrated at the beginning of marriage and child-rearing problems in the middle, financial conflicts spread over the whole life cycle, taking new forms as circumstances change. (5) Financial problems are more tangible than most other areas of conflict. If the husband impulsively buys a new car, it visibly reminds the wife that her wishes were not consulted or respected.

Financial problems may be divided into three types: everyday expenses, major purchases, and unpredictable disasters.

## Current Expenses

How much does it cost a family to live? The answer varies over the family life cycle and depends on the family's efficiency in controlling expenditures.

### LIFE CYCLE CRISES

Honeymoon-phase couples with both partners working are usually well-off financially. Though they don't own much equipment yet, consumption needs are low with only two mouths to feed. The husband's income so early in his career may be low, but their combined income often

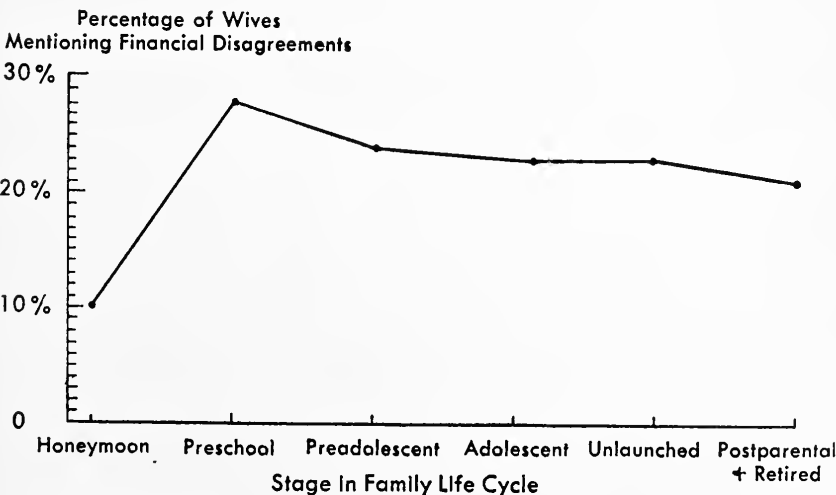


exceeds what he alone will be able to earn for many years. If his promotional prospects are dim, family income may never again be as high unless the wife goes back to work later on.

Immediately after this prosperous phase comes the worst one. Disagreements about money are mentioned most often by mothers of young children (see Fig. 14-1). Children precipitate a financial crisis of major proportions. The combined impact of losing the wife's income and adding the costs of the baby's food, clothing, medicine, and housing creates the severest strain on managerial ability the parents are ever likely to experience.

We have already seen that financial disagreements jump from minimum to maximum in response to this squeeze. Lansing and Morgan (1955) find, in addition, that liquid assets drop sharply, the percentage of families in debt reaches its highest point, and satisfaction with the standard of living sags to low ebb. All these changes make the early child-bearing period a severe financial crisis for most families. The larger the number of children and the faster they are added to the household, the deeper the crisis.

Though children become even more expensive as they get bigger, the husband's income rises as he gains experience and seniority. Consequently, strain eases gradually during the child-rearing years, save for the college-expense crisis. Paradoxically, the average husband's peak earnings come near the age of fifty, too late to do his children much good since the last child has normally left home. Not only do child-rearing expenses end, but also a sufficient inventory of family equipment accumulates to give the



Adapted from Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 247.

Figure 14-1. Financial Disagreements, by Stage in Family Life Cycle

postparental stage of the family life cycle a combination of maximum income with few necessary expenses. Consequently, optional expenditures rise at this time. Subsequently, retirement brings a second cut in income, the severity of which depends on the adequacy of advance saving.

From this life-cycle analysis there appear to be three critical intervals in family finances: the child-bearing years, college education years, and retirement years. Conversely, there are two eras of plenty—in the honeymoon and postparental stages. Each of these financial phases will command our attention, the first four in this chapter, the fifth in the next chapter on kinship.

#### THE ALLOCATION OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

How do families distribute their money among the various expenses that confront them every year? The answer depends on three major factors: the amount of money at their disposal, the number of dependents in the family, and the stage in the family life cycle.

The larger the amount of money available, the larger the proportion that can be allocated to optional, luxury-type items. Conversely, the fixed, basic necessities consume a smaller proportion.

Table 14-2 contrasts three income levels for families of the same education level (most of them college graduates, a few with one to three years of college). Since people don't eat much more, smoke much

**Table 14-2—Expenditures of College-educated Urban Families, by Income Class (after taxes)**

Category	NET INCOME		
	\$3,000-3,999	\$6,000-7,499	\$10,000+
Food and beverages	27.2%	25.2%	20.4%
Tobacco	1.6	1.2	.9
Housing	12.4	10.4	9.8
Utilities	3.5	3.1	2.4
Household operation	4.4	5.4	8.2
Furnishings and equipment	6.7	6.4	6.5
Clothing	9.9	11.0	12.7
Transportation	14.3	12.8	10.5
Medical care	5.3	4.6	3.1
Personal	2.1	1.9	1.6
Recreation, reading, education	5.3	6.8	6.4
Gifts and contributions	3.2	4.7	10.0
Personal insurance	3.2	5.3	5.3
Miscellaneous	.9	1.4	2.2
Total	100.0%	100.2%	100.0%
Mean expenditures	\$3,929	\$6,689	\$13,254

Computed from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Vol. XVIII (1957), 74-75. Source: Heads of families with thirteen to sixteen years of education (mean fifteen years), 1950. Income classes selected to show trends.

more, get sick oftener, or require more haircuts, such fixed-cost-type items shrink percentage-wise with rising income. Transportation too is a relatively standardized cost, provided it is confined to local travel. Housing and utilities expenses also decline proportionately.

On the other hand, allocations increase in discretionary areas. Higher household operating costs reflect the purchase of services to relieve the parents in the division of labor: maids, babysitters, and laundry services benefit the housewife in well-to-do homes.

More emphasis is placed on clothes, both in size of wardrobe and stylishness (versus the low-income concentration on multipurpose, durable clothes). Increased leisure time freed from housework allows more emphasis on recreation and education. More money is saved in many forms, including personal insurance. The biggest change, however, is the increased generosity to persons and organizations outside the family. Low-income families spend most of their limited resources on themselves. As income rises, gifts to relatives, friends, and worthy causes become more feasible, especially in the top income bracket.

Table 14-3 shows the effect of children on the standard of living when income is held constant. By and large, adding children is equivalent to reducing income; that is, the larger the number of children, the higher the percentage of income spent on food and utilities, and the lower the percentage spent on clothing, recreation-reading-and-education, and gifts and contributions. Every one of these trends parallels those in Table 14-2. Adding more children to the family reduces the standard of living, forcing concentration on essentials as the discretionary margin shrinks.

**Table 14-3—Expenditures of High-Income Young Urban Families, by Size of Family**

Category	SIZE OF FAMILY				
	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six+
Food and beverages	24.0%	23.7%	25.7%	26.0%	28.0%
Tobacco	1.4	1.3	1.7	1.0	2.6
Housing	11.4	9.5	9.0	11.8	5.0
Utilities	1.8	2.3	3.3	4.4	4.6
Household operation	3.9	6.8	4.6	4.1	4.9
Furnishings and equipment	10.4	6.9	8.7	7.4	6.4
Clothing	10.5	12.4	11.2	10.9	13.5
Transportation	15.2	13.3	14.5	15.7	9.8
Medical care	4.1	4.6	4.3	3.4	3.2
Personal care	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.6	2.0
Recreation, reading, education	5.6	8.0	6.3	6.9	4.2
Gifts and contributions	4.3	4.1	2.7	2.3	4.3
Personal insurance	4.0	4.5	5.0	3.1	7.1
Miscellaneous	1.6	.9	.7	1.5	5.6
Total	100.1%	100.2%	99.5%	100.1%	101.2%

Computed from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Vol. XVIII (1957), 86-97. Source: Husbands twenty-five to thirty-five years old; income after taxes of \$6,000-7,499 in 1950.

The following table on life-cycle changes is based on the assumption that income rises over the life cycle. It uses those income levels and family sizes most representative of the college-educated population in order to hold values and life-styles constant. While the data in Table 14-4 are not restricted to college-educated husbands, in every category the *average* husband has from thirteen to fifteen years' education.

Table 14-4 suggests that for these sorts of families, the childless phase involves heavy allocations to downpayments on cars and houses. The advent of children accentuates the need for household furnishings and equipment. The child-rearing years generally raise the costs of food, clothing, medical care, insurance, and recreation, reading, and education (provided there aren't too many children!).

As children get older, there is increased spending for transportation, perhaps on multiple automobiles for husband and wife and eventually for children old enough to drive.

Finally, the departure of the last child frees the budget for substantial increases in hired housekeeping services (extra-appreciated in old age) and in contributions to the happiness and welfare of others outside the family.

**Table 14-4—Expenditures of High-Income Urban Families, by Stage in Family Life Cycle**

Husband's Age	Under 25	25-35	35-45	45-55	55-65	65-75
Children	0	2	2	1	0	0
Income Bracket	\$6,000- 7,449	\$7,500- 9,999	\$7,500- 9,999	\$10,000+ 10,000+	\$10,000+ 10,000+	\$10,000+ 10,000+
Mean Education	13	15	14	15	14	13
Mean No. Workers	1.6	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.0	.9
<b>Expenditures</b>						
Food	22.6%	24.9%	25.4%	18.6%	17.5%	17.9%
Tobacco	1.4	.8	1.3	.8	.8	1.5
Housing	12.3	9.6	9.3	8.6	9.7	8.5
Utilities	2.1	3.4	3.6	1.8	2.3	3.1
Household operations	4.7	6.7	6.5	5.7	9.2	10.3
Furnishings	6.5	9.7	6.8	6.4	3.9	3.9
Clothing	11.0	12.0	10.5	12.4	9.7	7.2
Transportation	23.9	8.7	11.9	15.5	11.5	14.5
Medical	2.1	4.1	4.2	5.3	3.9	2.2
Personal	1.7	2.0	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.6
Recreation, etc.	5.8	7.9	6.7	7.3	4.8	4.6
Gifts	3.3	3.4	4.1	7.2	19.0	11.3
Insurance	2.7	6.6	7.0	5.9	4.6	12.0
Misc.	.0	.4	1.1	2.7	2.5	1.4
Total	100.1%	100.2%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%
Mean expenses	\$5,988	\$7,655	\$7,946	\$12,599	\$12,031	\$11,821

Computed from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Vol. XVIII (1957), 86-95. Income is net after taxes for 1950.

When urban families of all income levels, all sizes, and all stages in life are put together, the major categories of expense are:

Food, liquor, and tobacco	33.1%
Shelter	26.8
Clothing	11.6
Transportation	13.6

All other consumption costs are minor in comparison to these four. Even transportation costs are small for those who don't own an automobile. Hence food, clothing, and shelter are the basic costs of living for the average family. Even though the last three tables show that emphases change marginally with differences in income, family size, or the passage of time, the general picture is one of remarkable stability in the allocation of consumption expenditures.

*Decision-Making about Consumption Expenditures.* Though groups of families differ little in their allocation patterns, individual families vary more widely.

We have already mentioned the difference in transportation costs between carlessness and owning a car (to say nothing of two). Moreover, the cost of ownership increases directly with the expensiveness, newness, and frequency of replacement, since trade-in value depreciates most rapidly when cars are new.

In clothing, style-consciousness and growing children produce rapid obsolescence. In housing, costs jump for high-income families not because they must but because luxurious tastes are the vogue.

Like other areas of choice, financial decisions reflect people's values. Historically, the American middle class was production-oriented, giving priority in a less stable era to investments for competitive advantage and savings against financial reverses. Today, values have shifted toward consumption-orientation, symbolized by the play *You Can't Take It with You*. In both eras a minority of families have been neither production- nor consumption- but service-oriented. Though all three types of families necessarily spend most of their income for consumption purposes, their values lead them marginally to emphasize savings or consumption or charitable contributions, respectively.

Values differ between husbands and wives as well as between families. When they do, the usual processes of decision-making and conflict resolution come into play. Conflict may focus on a particular purchase or on the whole pattern of expenditures (for example, when couples feel their aggregate expenses are too high or that too little money is available for a particular purpose). When the whole pattern is questioned, budgeting offers a systematic method of decision-making.

*Budgeting.* A budget may be defined as a plan for allocating financial

resources. As such it represents a written record of decisions about how to spend money during a forthcoming interval. Usually plans are made for a year at a time, especially when income changes yearly. Any period is appropriate during which income and expenses remain reasonably stable and are correspondingly predictable. For couples whose income fluctuates wildly, a budget can still chart the use of a conservative minimal income, treating increases above that base as windfalls to be decided about later.

In actual practice only a few American families budget at any one time, though a larger (but unknown) proportion do so at critical points in their life cycle. Leavitt and Hanson (1950: 19–20) believe that “only two groups of persons of *necessity* should plan and keep a detailed budget: (1) newly wedded couples who have not yet had a chance to test their ability to live within their incomes; and (2) married couples . . . who find themselves in financial difficulties or who think they should save more of their incomes. . . . Budgets are to keep people out of trouble.” (*Italics added.*) Although budgeting is most urgently needed by those in danger of bankruptcy, it is useful also as a means of allocating expenditures more rationally. Couples who wish to be sure they get the most for their money (in the sense of spending it in accordance with their total pattern of values and needs) find budgeting a means of seeing their financial picture as a whole.

The value of budgeting is to strike a balance between amounts of money allocated in various directions. Insofar as there are fixed obligations, budgetary allotments are determined in advance. Mortgage payments are an example of such fixed obligations. Whyte notes a tendency in modern families toward “budgetism” which increases the proportion of all expenditures contractually scheduled:

This does not mean that they actually keep formal budgets. Quite the contrary; the beauty of budgetism is that one doesn't have to keep a budget at all. It's done automatically. . . . Just as young couples are now paying winter oil bills in equal monthly fractions through the year, so they seek to spread out all the other heavy seasonal obligations they can anticipate: Christmas presents, real-estate taxes, birthdays, spring cleaning, outfitting the children for school. If vendors will not oblige by accepting equal monthly installments, the purchasers will smooth out the load themselves by floating loans. (Whyte, 1957: 356–57.)

Despite such trends, there are always marginal areas of spending that are discretionary: food, clothing, recreation, and charitable contributions, for example, are subject to major variation and hence usefully planned in advance—not in terms of what is to be bought but roughly what weight is to be given each category.

The first time is the hardest. Planning in advance of the first year of marriage requires shooting in the dark. However, most items of current

expense are so recurrent that experience is soon gained for use in future planning.

What can engaged couples go on in planning first-year expenses? Previous expenditures for clothes and personal items may not change much with marriage. As for the new costs of keeping house, more can be gained from newlyweds who've just set up housekeeping than from parents who've long since equipped their houses and moved into higher income brackets.

Even the experience of couples of the same age and income can hardly be more than a point of departure. The distinctive values held by particular people properly shape their distribution of money. No couple need apologize to their friends nor to any precut financial plan because they choose to sink extra money in any particular direction. That's their privilege as an independent married couple:

Reg and I figure on spending over a hundred dollars a month on food. When I tell my friends about it they are horrified and say, "How can you afford it on a teacher's salary?" Of course, we have to give up some of the fancy clothes they go in for. But Reg has a huge appetite and both of us feel that a thick juicy steak is one of the really good things of life.

The infinite variety of personal preferences means that couples must work out their own financial destiny. Lists of proper percentages to be allocated to different items can be more hindrance than help if taken as inflexible rules rather than as suggestive guides. Even the categories used should reflect personal predilections. Those with a passion for photography or music may need separate pigeonholes for their hobbies, while others could lump these costs under the single heading of "recreation." From year to year, as interests wane and new needs arise, categories should be changed accordingly. A good financial plan allocates (a) to such categories as are significant in the life of the couple (b) those amounts of money that yield them the maximum mutual satisfaction.

No budget ever gets so detailed that it says just what the money in each category shall be spent on. Rather, it guarantees that the seventy dollars a month will be there to spend as the food-buyer sees fit. There is still freedom to decide whether to have chicken or pork chops tomorrow. A husband limited to \$100 a year for clothes is still free to choose between a new summer suit or a winter one. The fact that he can't afford both reflects on his income more than on the budget. The budget just makes his "poverty" unmistakably plain.

Those who want to maximize their freedom can throw in a "miscellaneous" item or personal allowances monogrammed "his" and "hers" and splurgeable will-o-the-wisp:

Sylvia is terribly frugal about records. She thinks it's wonderful the way you can borrow them from libraries. I like to buy lots of them and get a keen pleasure out of coming in the room and seeing that long shelf of LP's

even though I may not play any one of them very regularly. Since I haven't been able to sell her yet on the value of buying records, we put a juicy \$15 a month personal allowance in the budget which gives me a chance to go ahead and buy records whenever I want to.

Though financial planning is usually done a year in advance, revisions to meet circumstances are always possible. Especially in the first year of marriage (or of budgeting), revisions are to be expected as new needs emerge. Beginning planners typically overlook Christmas and wedding presents, vacation trips, newspapers and magazines, dry cleaning and shoe repairs, lunches away from home, tobacco, entertaining, and savings for emergencies. These need not all be separate items, but the budget should provide somewhere for these "little" costs that sometimes add up to so much.

Although making a budget takes a good many conversations, it saves spats subsequently. Applying it requires keeping records to show where the money has gone so far. Jotting down expenditures can be done while the clerk is making change. Tallying up the month's expenses takes an hour or so, but filling out an income tax "long form" is that much easier when records are adequate. In the long run, the dividends of budgeting can be well worth the small investment of time.

Budgeting is not a panacea. Couples who lack the prerequisites for rational problem-solving will probably violate it. Even for self-controlled couples, it is never more than a prediction of spending patterns. Inevitably, actual expenditures differ from the prediction—running a bit over here, a bit under there. But even crude forecasting is better than no forethought at all, especially for people subject to impulse buying:

When we first got married, Tom would cash his monthly pay check, pay the bills and buy things with very little thought of how we would meet the expenses of the last half of the month. We would eat quite well the first two weeks and skimp the last two. Even though I wanted him to be the head of the home, I would accuse him of being stupid when it came to handling money. I urged him to budget our money but he said he couldn't—it made him nervous. Finally we came to realize that he definitely is not a mathematician. So we agreed that I should take over the responsibility of budgeting our money to meet all the demands. This way he isn't frustrated by a task he isn't temperamentally suited for, and I have a free hand to use my skill for the benefit of the whole family.

With increased experience many couples gain a "feel" for financial allocation that requires less detailed control. The more rapidly their income rises, the less the danger of bankruptcy. Hence the need for systematic planning decreases in the later stages of family life. In changing circumstances, however, and especially when change is for the worse, the systematic decision-making involved in budgeting helps prevent disaster and maximize returns from the resources at a couple's disposal.



Paradoxical as it may seem, planning tends to be most common not among the low-income families which need it most but among higher income families with more discretionary funds. One reason is the close correlation between education and the ability to plan. Whereas middle-class women believe in planning for the future, working class wives "are not given to abstract thinking and generally find paper budgets or written records more confusing than helpful" (Rainwater, 1959: 155). Budgeting, therefore, while potentially an emergency device for families in trouble is more often used to guarantee maximum satisfaction in financial management.

## Major Expenses

Budgeting and budgetism take care of routine expenses. Items too large for current income require special arrangements.

We have already mentioned two of these: college education and retirement expenses. The remaining one arises first after marriage—the cost of buying and equipping a house. Since couples usually buy their furniture and appliances first and their house later, we will take them up in that order.

### EQUIPMENT FOR FAMILY LIVING

The 1953 Survey of Consumer Finances indicates that most newly married couples live in rented apartments (Lansing and Morgan, 1955: 42–43). The easiest place to begin keeping house is in an apartment already furnished with major appliances and furniture. Enough smaller items must be bought to tax the couple's time and money during the first few months. Renting furnished also enables couples to buy a car for ease of access to their two jobs and their leisure-time recreation spots. Television or hi fi is also an early purchase since these are not standard equipment in furnished apartments.

Many couples move next to an unfurnished apartment or house. This necessitates buying furniture, plus perhaps a refrigerator, stove, and washing machine.

In most cases the husband's income isn't sufficient to pay for such expensive items outright, especially when several come at once. Hence couples often resort to instalment buying or rely on the wife's income.

*Instalment Buying.* According to Whyte one element in "budgetism" is the use of instalment buying whenever possible. Table 14-5 shows that most families rely on some form of credit in buying houses and cars but only a minority do for smaller items. In general, of course, the more expensive the item, the smaller the number of families able to pay cash.

Conversely, the higher the family income, the larger the proportion buying such items for cash (Huntington, 1957: 164). Credit may be supplied either by a financial agency (as through a mortgage loan) or by the seller in the case of instalment buying.

**Table 14-5—Proportion of Purchases Involving Use of Credit, by Type and Cost of Item**

Item	COST OF ITEM	
	Under \$25	\$25+
Clothing	12%	23%
Furniture	18	38
Appliances	15	44
Cars and accessories	—	61
Housing	—	75

Adapted from Ferber, 1955: 81. Source: Representative sample of Decatur, Illinois families, 1951. Reciprocal percentages purchased for cash.

An interesting feature of Table 14-5 is the way families use credit even for items costing less than \$25. Under such circumstances, credit is hardly necessary. Whyte (1957: 360-61) points out that instalment buying is a costly alternative to paying cash:

A mythical couple we will call the Frugals decide to defer all but necessary purchases for enough months to accumulate an extra \$500. They will then have a revolving fund of their own which they can use for cash purchases, and instead of paying a fixed amount each month in installment loans, they will use these sums to replenish the \$500.

Now let's take a normal couple. The Joneses, with precisely the same income, don't put off purchases but instead commit themselves to a combination of installment loans and revolving-credit plans. At the end of ten years the Joneses would have paid out somewhere around \$800 in interest. The Frugals, by contrast, would have earned interest—roughly \$150. Not counting the extra benefits they would have reaped by being able to buy for cash, they would be, in toto, almost a thousand dollars better off.

In these days of discount houses selling only for cash, the extra benefits to the Frugals are likely to be substantial.

In money terms, therefore, instalment buying is expensive. According to *Consumer Reports*, "interest charges for instalment buying run all the way from a low of around 18 per cent, figured as true annual interest, to a high of 150 per cent or more" (July 1958: 388). Sometimes, as in buying a house, the cost of credit may be worthwhile. It must be balanced in each case against the loss suffered in deferring the purchase until the necessary cash could be accumulated. The lower the cost and the less urgent the purchase, the greater the advisability of waiting to pay cash.

*Use of the Wife's Income.* For newlyweds with dual incomes, wait-

ing for cash doesn't take long—provided the wife's income is not squandered in riotous living.

There are good reasons for allocating to special purposes the wife's net income (after taxes and her extra expenses). When her income is spent on current expenses, living standards are raised spectacularly. Hamburger is converted into filet mignon and beer into champagne. But the shock when she quits work is terrific:

We were living pretty well until Lorraine quit work in September and stopped bringing home her \$245 a month. We used to go out quite a bit but we can't afford to now. Both of us have begun to worry now about the financial responsibility for the home and the baby.

Since belt-tightening is painful, living beyond the husband's means spells trouble ahead. Either that or the wife feels pressured to keep working indefinitely:

At first I worked out of necessity because a lawyer's income is so unpredictable when he first starts. But I never really felt I could quit. We got so accustomed to the "little extras" which came with the money I earned that I felt I had to keep at it. When I wanted to stop, the extra expense of the children kept me going.

If the wife is to stay home after the children arrive and her income isn't to be dissipated on "little extras," relying on her income for current expenses must be studiously avoided. Only when the husband's income can be counted on to rise quickly (for example, on completing a medical internship), is it safe for the wife to contribute to everyday maintenance. No matter how meager the husband's salary, her income should ordinarily be earmarked for special purposes.

Diverting the wife's income to special purposes eases the advent of children in two ways. In addition to preventing the parents from getting accustomed to a level of living they must soon abandon, it reduces the burden on the husband's subsequent income. The larger the number of appliances and furniture items purchased while the wife is still working, the better equipped the couple will be for living with children. Should her earnings complete the car and furnishings purchases, they can then be turned toward the problem of buying a house.

#### HOUSING FOR FAMILY LIVING

In recent years the Federal Government has steadily reduced the size of the downpayment required on FHA mortgages. As a result it is now possible to buy a house soon after marriage.

Low downpayments have one disadvantage, however. The lower the downpayment, the higher the monthly payments. To ease the strain on the child-bearing stage, it is desirable to have monthly payments as small

as possible. Hence, it is valuable to make the largest possible downpayment.

This implies that dual-income couples should postpone their first house-purchase until the wife is ready to quit working. Until then, she is too busy to take on the extra work of a family-sized house anyway. By the time she is ready to change roles, the maximum downpayment possible will be saved up.

To protect such savings from disappearing in current expenditures, it is desirable to remove them from the regular checking account to some sort of savings account. There they have the added advantage of earning interest. However, short-term savings should not be tied up where they cannot be readily retrieved (either immediately or on short notice) nor should they have to be on deposit excessively long before earning interest. If interest is computed quarterly or even monthly, money withdrawn when it is needed will not lose interest on the time it is invested.

#### HIGHER EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

House-buying in America is so standardized that little need be said about it. Financing children's college educations, however, is highly variable. The problem, moreover, is becoming more difficult since the costs of higher education are rising faster than the cost of living and faster than American income (in January 1961, *Coronet* estimated the trend of increase at 5 per cent per year which means costs will double by the time today's babies reach student age).

Already in the late 1950's, almost half the parents of students then in college felt their contribution was inadequate (Lansing, 1960). Of course, the lower the family income and the larger the number of children, the greater the difficulty in making this contribution. As long as current trends persist, family financial management will be increasingly challenged to meet this particular major expense.

For the academic year 1959-60, parental contributions met 61 per cent of college expenses, students' earnings 23 per cent, scholarships 9 per cent, and miscellaneous sources the remaining 7 per cent. Where do parents get their contribution from?

Table 14-6 shows that less than half the families save any money in advance. This half, of course, finds college financing less difficult. However, it is easier partly because only high-income families manage to save much in advance. (Roper found in 1959 that only 39 per cent of parents expecting one or more children to go to college had begun saving for this purpose. Median savings in the previous year for this minority were almost \$700 for high-income families but hardly more than \$200 for above-average- and \$100 for average-income families.) Since the typical family begins saving only ten years before the child enters col-

**Table 14-6—Sources of Parental Contributions to College Expenses**

Source of Funds	Percentage of All Parents of College Students
Current income, reduced expenses	44%
Mother worked more	19
Father worked more	8
Borrowed money	8
Saved money in advance	48
Total	127%

From Lansing, 1960: 52. Source: National sample of parents of students in college 1955-60. Total adds to more than 100% because some families used more than one method.

lege, the latter amounts will hardly finance a single child's four years, much less more than one child's education.

Theoretically, borrowing money is more appropriate to family life cycle dynamics than saving it in advance. If the average family has a financial surplus *after* children go to college, borrowed funds should be easier to repay than advance savings are to set aside during the lean years while children are growing up. A readily available source of collateral for such borrowing is the family home. By refinancing the mortgage, thousands of dollars could become available to the average family.

Table 14-6 shows, however, that borrowing is relatively rare. Moreover, borrowing is resorted to chiefly as an act of desperation by those in the greatest financial difficulty. Extra work by the father or mother, similarly, is primarily an act of desperation for those whose past or present incomes are not adequate for setting aside the necessary amounts.

By and large, then, advance saving is the most satisfactory means used to increase financial resources during the college years. Given this chief method of financing, two questions arise: How should it be set aside? Where? The answers to these questions are implicit in the following list which shows in order of popularity where parents who save money invest it: (1) savings account in bank; (2) endowment insurance; (3) government bonds; (4) common stock (interpolated from Lansing, 1960 and Roper, 1960).

*Savings Accounts.* The most widespread form of investment is in savings accounts in banks and similar financial institutions. Usually this relies on parental self-discipline to put money in the account, and even more heavily on self-discipline to leave it there. Roper's respondents list as one of the major "advantages" of savings accounts the fact that they "can be used for other things" besides education. This liquidity means savings accounts are frequently multipurpose affairs, not restricted to educational purposes. They are often raided in family crises leaving the children lucky if their educational funds survive intact.

*Endowment Insurance.* An insurance policy designed to mature

when the child reaches college age provides for regular, forced payment whenever the bill arrives in the mail. It also provides insurance against the premature death of the father, provided the policy is written on the life of the father with the child as beneficiary. (Unfortunately, many people insure the child's life with these policies.) Roper's study shows that in recent years endowment insurance has become increasingly popular.

Some form of insurance to protect the child from the consequences of the premature death of the father is necessary. Families that invest their savings in more profitable directions than endowment insurance should be sure to carry enough insurance on the father's life to cover the interval during which savings are being accumulated. Decreasing term insurance (see below) is the appropriate form of such insurance.

*Government Bonds.* "Safety" is the most distinctive popular appeal of government bonds. Where payroll-deduction, bond-a-month plans exist, they also have the regular, forced payment advantages of endowment insurance. However, since they come in smaller denominations, there is more temptation to cash in "just one" bond than to cash in a whole insurance policy. Like insurance policies, government bonds carry maturity dates which discourage the impulsive raiding to which savings accounts are subject.

*Common Stocks.* Rarest of the four methods of investment is the purchase of common stocks, either directly or through mutual investment funds. Unlike the other three methods that have a fixed return, stocks bring a fluctuating return correlated with the fate of the American economy. Should the economy decline, the value of stocks would too. The converse of this risk is that stocks gain during inflationary periods. Indeed, investigation by James T. Sudol of the University of Michigan shows that the annual rate of return on 92 major industrial stocks purchased regularly between 1950 and 1961 was 13.5 per cent.

This type of investment is especially useful when begun early enough in the child's life to amortize the broker's fees over a period of ten or more years. As usual, it requires supplementary insurance while the amount saved is small. King (1954) also recommends conservatively that reliance not be placed exclusively on fluctuating investments but on a combination with some sort of fixed-return savings to provide a hedge against deflation.

The long-run trends in the United States are inflationary. Hence more families should investigate the higher returns and the hedge against inflation that Roper's stock-purchasers value.

For a few American families real estate investments serve the same purpose. Though it may be difficult to liquidate by selling out, real estate (like most forms of saving) can be used as collateral for borrowing college funds if the market is sticky.

## RETIREMENT INCOME

The problems of retirement income are similar to those involved in college expenses. In both cases a long period is available for accumulating the necessary reserves. For retirement purposes Social Security provides a useful minimum but one which must be supplemented. The various types of investment utilized for college savings are also available. However, if college expenses twenty years hence are somewhat unpredictable for new parents, retirement costs have the added enigma that death is even less predictable. The date when retirement begins can be planned in advance but the date when it ends cannot.

Hence it is necessary to rely primarily on some form of annuity, that is, on an insurance policy that will yield income as long as the beneficiary lives. Such policies spread the risk of longevity among a large enough group to be able to support even those who "survive to one-hundred-and-five."

Many companies have compulsory retirement programs to supplement Social Security. For those who have not previously saved adequately for this purpose, the launching of the last child is the signal to begin setting aside a major portion of income.

## Insurance Against Catastrophe

In rural societies families are rescued from the economic consequences of fire, illness, and death by neighbors and kin. When a barn burns down, they rally round to build another. When a farmer is ill, they harvest his crops. If he dies young, they take in his widow and children. A reciprocal network of personal obligations based on blood and community cushions each family against the blows of fate.

In urban societies these ties weaken. Geographical mobility undermines the sense of community and weakens kinship bonds. Urban housing allows less flexibility for taking in relatives, and urban dwellers seldom learn house-building skills. In our urban economy, money provides for the purchase of skills once commandeered by personal loyalties. So the modern resource for coping with catastrophe is insurance.

To the traditional threats of fire, illness, and death, technology has added a fourth—auto accidents. The toughest of these is death, but each deserves mention.

## AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

The chief threat of economic disaster in owning an automobile is not what someone else may do to my car but what I may do to him. To be

sure, if I have a very new or very expensive car, I may wish to protect myself against having to replace it. Indeed, if I don't own the car outright but am only buying it piece by piece, the financier may require me to protect *his* investment by carrying collision insurance.

Otherwise, it is more economical to bear the collision risk oneself, especially for cars whose trade-in value has depreciated severely. Even for new cars, the insurance problem is how to pay for big bumps not the little ones. Hence it is unnecessarily expensive to carry complete coverage and more economical to subscribe to deductible clauses that insure against damage above a certain amount (such as \$100).

Liability insurance is another matter. An automobile can wreak destruction on life and property worth thousands of dollars in damage suits. For this reason many states require auto owners to carry insurance to recompense accident victims. Liability insurance protects the family from bankruptcy should they have the misfortune to incur such a financial obligation to others.

#### PROPERTY INSURANCE

Whereas cars may be worth so little that the owner could replace them out of pocket, losing a house is a bigger disaster. Again, families that have borrowed money to buy are required to carry enough insurance to cover the outstanding mortgage balance.

Though the chief risk of major destruction is from fire, "extended coverage" for storms and other threats costs little more than fire insurance alone. Comprehensive home insurance policies cover liability for damages incurred on the property and theft of personal belongings. Package policies are less expensive than separate ones covering the same risks.

Household insurance is another area where cash buying saves installment costs. Families wealthy or thrifty enough to pay for several years' insurance at once win substantial discounts over the cost of annual (or worse yet quarterly or monthly) instalments.

#### HEALTH INSURANCE

Like higher education, the costs of medical care are rising faster than the cost of living. As medical science becomes more specialized and medical equipment more elaborate, the possibilities of incurring disastrous medical bills have multiplied.

As with collision insurance there is little need to cover everyday medical expenses. These can be budgeted almost as predictably as other current expenses. The insurance problem involves the rare but catastrophic long illness or complex surgery that costs thousands of dollars.



Recently, a new type of insurance has been developed to serve this purpose. Called "major medical insurance," it has a deductible clause for bills under \$100 per family member. But when bills run sky high and Blue Cross benefits are exhausted, major medical insurance takes over and pays the rest. Blue Cross and Blue Shield are useful types of health insurance, but most plans have limits that expire in the worst cases precisely when unlimited insurance is most needed. The purpose of insurance is to provide protection against the worst disasters, not the little ones—hence the value of major medical insurance.

#### LIFE INSURANCE

The worst thing that can happen to a family economically (as well as otherwise) is to lose the father while the children are young. This may mean losing hundreds of thousands of dollars of potential income, in comparison to which losses through illness, fire, or auto accidents are trifling. The chances of any given husband's premature death are small—but the consequences are so severe that this risk deserves to be spread through the community by means of insurance.

*Social Security.* Thanks to Social Security, most American families have some protection against the husband's death. Monthly allotments to widows with dependent children are not sufficient to sustain an adequate standard of living, but they help fill the gap and reduce the amount of personal insurance that needs to be carried.

*Life-Cycle Changes in Insurance Needs.* The purpose of insurance is to provide money for recouping economic losses or meeting expenses that could not otherwise be met. In the case of the family, the chief economic hazard is loss of the husband's income. To lose a child will not bankrupt a middle-class family. Once the burial expenses have been paid out of savings, the burden on the family income is reduced by one less dependent. Hence, insurance never needs to be taken on the life of a child.

Losing a housekeeper is more serious. To be sure, if there are no children, the husband could go back to taking care of himself (just as a widow could go back to supporting herself). Hence childless young couples have no need for life insurance. However, a mother of young children is less easily dispensed with. The father cannot stay home to care for the children, so there are increased babysitting and housekeeper expenses. If the husband's life is adequately insured, there would be some point in insuring the wife's too during the years when she is performing the role of mother.

The trouble is that very few families adequately insure the father. As of 1950 the average American family carried enough insurance to replace the husband's income for only *one* year (Morgan, 1955: 176).

To be sure, Social Security provides about half the average husband's income for the duration of the children's dependent years, but where is the other half to come from after the insured two half-years are used up? Social Security benefits are reduced if the wife works very much, so that resource is next to useless. Hence the average American family must expect a 50 per cent cut in its standard of living due to inadequate insurance, should the father die too soon. (For higher income families, the loss would be even greater since Social Security is a smaller proportion of their normal standard of living.)

To prevent this economic hardship, families need enough insurance to close the gap between Social Security provisions and their normal living costs until the time when the youngest child reaches maturity.

If this gap were \$5,000 per year and the youngest child had twenty years to go to maturity, a family would need \$100,000 worth of insurance (disregarding the complexities of compound interest). Though \$100,000 would be needed the first year, only \$95,000 is necessary the next year, and so on until nothing is needed after the last child leaves home.

To summarize, then, the basic life insurance needs of the family begin at zero in the honeymoon phase but hit higher peaks with the birth of each child. After the last child is born, needs decline steadily from year to year to zero when he leaves home.

Insurance needs are highest just when family economic resources are lowest. Hence the average family needs insurance that is as inexpensive as possible and that also declines in value from year to year. Only one type of life insurance offers these features.

*Types of Life Insurance.* The following list (adapted from Morgan, 1955: 163) shows the approximate cost per year for insurance with an initial value of \$100,000 purchased at age thirty:

20-year endowment	\$4,615
20-payment life	3,090
Ordinary life insurance (paid up at eighty-five)	1,940
20-year term insurance	735
20-year decreasing term insurance	390

"Decreasing term insurance" is the cheapest and the only form that most families can afford in adequate amounts during the child-rearing years and the only one that decreases from maximum value at the beginning of the twenty-year period to zero at the end.

Decreasing term insurance (like ordinary term) is pure insurance with no investment feature involved. Like fire insurance which repays the buyer only in the event of fire, it pays off only if the owner dies during the life of the policy.

Decreasing term comes under a variety of names, often called

"mortgage protection" insurance since it decreases at a rate similar to a mortgage loan of the same duration. Or it may be called "income protection" insurance. For pure insurance geared to the child-rearing phase of the family life cycle, decreasing term is the best buy. It must be supplemented, however, by other means of saving for educational and retirement expenses.

All other forms of insurance provide more coverage than necessary in the later years if taken out in adequate amounts at the beginning of child-bearing. More likely, since they are so expensive, they limit the buyer to too little coverage in the early years when need is greatest. As a result the middle class is composed of young families with too little insurance and middle-aged couples with too much.

Other forms of insurance cost more because they return more—more than the minimum needs for protecting children against the premature death of their father. Families that can afford to do so may wish to take advantage of these "extra" returns. But extras should not take precedence over the basic requirement of providing enough pure insurance.

"Ordinary life insurance" is the commonest form sold. Premiums are paid as long as the individual lives (or up to a certain age such as the age eighty-five shown in the list). Whenever the individual dies, the beneficiary gets the face value of the policy. In the meantime, the policy gradually increases in loan value or cash surrender value, since it combines death protection with a savings feature.

"20-Payment Life" insurance is a form of limited-payment insurance. At the end of twenty years the policy is completely paid for and remains in force for the life of the insured. An individual who wants to buy insurance at age forty-five might choose this kind so his payments will be completed by retirement.

"20-year Endowment" pays full value should the insured die during the twenty-year interval. If he survives, the company pays the face amount to the beneficiary at that time. This is primarily a savings program with the insurance feature added. It is the most popular form of insured saving for children's college expenses.

In actual practice, families which rely on insurance policies to cover both their protection and savings needs are apt to combine different types of policies in varying amounts. Families seeking higher returns on their savings may find decreasing term insurance provides the maximum protection at lowest cost while they invest their savings regularly in stocks and other equities.

One option in most forms of insurance is disability waivers of premiums. If the husband is disabled and unable to work but not actually killed, the family is in a fix. The fix can be relieved slightly by policy provisions that waive the premiums in case the insured is unable to

work. Then the insurance remains in force for the duration of the policy without the family having to make any more payments. Such provisions cost slightly more but provide added protection.

Theoretically, it would be desirable to carry insurance that would also provide family income in the event of the father's disability. Unfortunately, Morgan concludes that such insurance is too expensive and too hedged with limitations to be worthwhile (1955: 182). This is one area in which social inventions have yet to be made to protect families against financial disaster.

# *The*

## *Extended Family*

### *Networks*

Marriage is not just an individual affair. As I pointed out in discussing weddings, parents and other relatives are vitally interested in the marriages of the younger generation. Every partner acquired is a new recruit to the extended family fold. In some feudal societies only the bride is considered a recruit to the husband's family (and a loss to her own). But in our bilateral American system both partners become members of each others' families. Hence they participate in two extended family networks, the husband's and the wife's.

The most important links in these networks are between parents and children, that is, between the husband and his parents, the wife and her parents. Prior to marriage these are the closest ties in human experience, originating in the utter dependency of infants on parents and the long years of nurture to maturity. So strong are these ties that they normally last as long as parents are alive.

When there is more than one child, the parents become the focus for continued association among the siblings. Children who grow up together have an intimacy of relationship second only to that with their

parents. Hence childhood ties with siblings as well as with parents are significant links in kinship networks. Cousins who never live together, by contrast, have far weaker bonds.

Primarily, then, marriage brings together individuals who have strong ties with their respective families of orientation. As they create a new family of procreation, there are sometimes transitional problems, sometimes allocative problems, and sometimes problems of culture conflict. But almost always, beyond the problems, there are positive ties of sociability and mutual help between family units.

## Sources of Conflict

In America the word "in-law" is one to conjure with. The magic is black. In the abstract, "mother-in-law" has particularly negative connotations. In a free association test, students typically gave such responses as "fight," "bother," "terrible," "ugh," "hatred," and "hell" to this stimulus. The mother-in-law is the modern incarnation of ancient witchcraft, the butt of jokes and cartoons expressing the resentment of persecuted sons- and daughters-in-law.

Waller and Hill (1951: 441) point out that "grandmother" is a far more positive word, even though once the children arrive, mother-in-law and grandmother are the same person. Yet not quite. From *my* point of view, *my* grandmothers were those women two generations removed who were so kind to me as a child. However, *my* mother-in-law is this stranger, only one generation older, whom I acquired by marriage. Whereas grandparents are part of my birthright, parents-in-law are late intrusions in life and take a while getting used to. Hence the transitional problems in interfamily relationships.

### TRANSITIONAL PROBLEMS

Though far less prevalent than other types of problems, in-law problems are uniquely concentrated at the beginning of marriage. Blood and Wolfe (1960: 247), for example, find disagreements over in-laws commonest in the honeymoon stage, declining steadily thereafter. Thomas (1956: 234), similarly, finds in-law problems prominent in the disintegration of Catholic marriages that break up soonest, especially those that fail within the first year.

Marriage is a new relationship that develops gradually throughout courtship as boy and girl come to depend more on each other and less on their parents. In some cases parents resist the "loss" of their dependents, or children themselves feel ambivalent about the realignment.

Then parent-child relationships vie with husband-wife relationships in conflicts of loyalty.

*Parental Possessiveness.* When the source of difficulty is the inability of parents to allow children to grow up the parent most involved is likely to be the mother. Men generally encourage independence as a value in life (cf. Rosen and d'Andrade, 1959). Women, however, are more apt to find emotional gratification in having others depend on them. For women whose chief satisfaction is derived from being a mother, the prospect of their children leaving home is frightening. Sometimes it is the first child whose marriage provokes the strongest resistance. Sometimes the last child is the last defense against an empty life. In either case mothers almost exclusively get blamed for "possessiveness" (Duvall, 1954: 195).

The preventive or cure for possessiveness is the discovery of alternative roles in life to replace the mother role. A vital marriage is one alternative. Going to work and plunging into community activities are others.

*Childish Overdependence.* The consequence of overpossessiveness by the mother is overdependence by the child. Though usually the husband's mother is the chief bugaboo in marriage, the wife's mother is the focus of conflict in cases where overdependence is the root of the difficulty. Since daughters are sheltered more than sons, wives are more apt to cause in-law trouble by figuratively or literally "going home to mother" when tension arises between husband and wife (Stryker, 1955).

Overdependence is most likely for those who marry young. Indeed, it is one expression of immaturity and incomplete preparation for marriage. According to Blood and Wolfe (p. 248), the younger the bride, the greater the incidence of in-law disagreements.

When youthfulness causes overdependence, time may solve the problem. In extreme cases attachment between wife and mother may need therapeutic assistance before it can be reduced to normal proportions.

#### ALLOCATIONAL PROBLEMS

Transitional problems are the exception rather than the rule. Most parents are mature enough to release their children gracefully, and most children mature enough to assume adult roles confidently. Every couple, however, must divide their time between two kinship networks. Every couple, that is, who have two networks available. Under unusual circumstances couples have only one network, so their allocational problems are minimized. To be sure, they may still have to choose between different units of the network—which to visit when. But jealousy is less likely within a given network than between networks.

For example, bilateral kin are replaced by a single network in international marriages. When one partner (usually the bride) moves to the husband's side of the world, her family ties are so weakened by distance that they cease having much functional existence. Hence, international marriages may have better-than-average relations with the remaining network. In the United States this is true of many marriages between American soldiers and Japanese war-brides (Strauss, 1954).

Normally, however, both networks are accessible and by their very existence place competing demands on the young couple for time and attention. For example, both families may want simultaneous visits from their children. Especially at Christmas or High Holy Days, the custom of gathering together all the children (plus their spouses and the grandchildren) is felt with equal urgency bilaterally. Only a Solomon could find a solution that would not disappoint one family (or even both):

At every holiday we always get invited out by both our families. Dulcie and I come from very close-knit families so if we don't watch ourselves, we go right ahead and tell both "Of course we'll be there." More than once we've separately committed the family to being in two places 100 miles apart for Thanksgiving dinner, and then there's general hair-tearing all around.

In similar ways both senior families may expect financial help in distress, constant letter-writing, visits from the grandchildren, and other favors that tax the couple's resources.

It would be a mistake to assume that all claims are initiated by the older generation. The fact that husband and wife grow up in separate families gives each a sense of identification with his own network and a natural tendency to push its claims. Even if both partners could be neutral in their identifications, no couple can be in two places at once. So when familistic occasions arise, the structure of family relations requires that choices be made between networks.

#### PROBLEMS OF CULTURE CONFLICT

The most common complaint against in-laws generally and mothers-in-law in particular is meddlesomeness (Duvall, 1954: 217, 280). Parents may have all sorts of reasons for intervening in the life of a young couple, but the most potent is a clash of cultures. Husband and wife have a hard enough time resolving their differences without reinforcements rushing into the fray. Yet when matters of principle are at stake, restraint is difficult for both generations. Even in technical matters like cooking or keeping house, in-laws intervene all too easily, exaggerating the intensity of conflict and extending the area beyond the issue at hand to questions of their right to get involved at all.

*Conflicting Family Cultures.* Every family has a culture of its own—distinctive ways of living it takes for granted as proper that are in-



grained through years of usage. These include the family's "rituals." A ritual, in this sense, is "a prescribed procedure, arising out of family interaction, involving a pattern of defined behavior, which is directed toward some specific end or purpose, and acquires rigidity and a sense of rightness as a result of its continuing history" (Bossard and Boll, 1950: 29). Differing ways of celebrating religious holidays (even by members of the same denomination), of spending Saturdays, or of putting children to bed are brought to marriage along with peculiarities of etiquette, vocabulary, and the division of labor. Whose culture is to prevail? Usually the wife's—since she is the chief custodian of the children. Yet in the process, wife and mother-in-law may come to verbal blows:

I have a problem with Van's mother. We never had any trouble until the baby was born, but we had a big argument over the formula. She thought I was making it all wrong, but my father's a doctor and I've been to prenatal classes so I figure I ought to know.

Conflict about how to raise the baby is common even between young mothers and their *own* parents in this era of rapidly changing practice. Yet somehow when the trouble is with *his* mother, it snowballs into "in-law trouble." Whether string beans should be cooked with ham or without, whether to say "either" or "eyether" or to dress four-year-olds in suits or playclothes—the possibilities of conflict are numerous. In the first months of marriage both sets of parents unconsciously welcome decisions in favor of their own idiosyncrasies and breed little in-law tensions when their ways are snubbed. Even where parents are not actively involved in culture conflicts, each parental family is a living demonstration to the child-in-law of a differing way of life and hence a challenge to his own.

Probably the fact that women are the chief bearers of family culture accounts for the fact that they are the chief contenders in in-law conflict.

Table 15-1 suggests three principles of in-law conflict: (1) parents-in-law cause more trouble than siblings-in-law; (2) feminine relatives cause more trouble than male relatives; (3) wives get involved in more

**Table 15-1—In-Laws with Whom Husbands and Wives Experience Friction**

In-Law	PERCENTAGE EXPERIENCING FRICTION	
	Husbands	Wives
Mother-in-law	9.0%	14.7%
Sister-in-law	3.4	3.8
Father-in-law	3.2	3.2
Brother-in-law	0.6	1.8
Two or more of the above	5.1	5.9
Total	21.3%	29.4%

Adapted from a study by Judson T. Landis of 544 couples in the early years of marriage (Landis and Landis, 1958: 406).

in-law conflict than husbands. All three pile up in the relationship between wife and mother-in-law to make it an area for spontaneous combustion.

*Intergenerational Change.* Reconciling family cultures is a universal problem that inevitably involves the older generation to some degree. Each family enjoys seeing its traditions carried on in the next generation. But what if they are rejected? What if one's own son or daughter feels that the old ways are not good ways but bad ones—that they are old-fashioned, outmoded, feudal?

Then the battle lines are drawn, not neatly between kinship networks, but complexly between parents and both child and child-in-law. Then junior couples struggle to rebel and senior couples to dominate in endless feuds. Then the natural respect of young for old and affection of old for young are replaced by bitterness and estrangement.

Intergenerational conflict is not universal. It occurs when societies change so fast that a gulf develops between whole generations (as in postwar Japan). It occurs when immigrant families move to the United States—the older generation representing the old country and the younger generation the new. (In Minnesota a generation of college students rebelled against their rural Scandinavian background—Dinkel, 1943.) It happens also when ambitious young couples move up the social scale, leaving their parents behind (LeMasters, 1954).

If the generations mix under such circumstances, conflict is to be expected. To avoid it, they usually drift apart, confining their interaction to the minimum their conscience requires. In either case the warmth of kinship is chilled.

*Mixed Marriages.* In Chapter 3 the involvement of in-laws in the identification problems of children of mixed marriages was discussed so extensively that it need not be treated here. Culture conflict in mixed marriages is simply the most vivid of the clashes any marriage may encounter as two ways of living are fitted together.

## Sociability in the Extended Family Network

It would be unfortunate if the preceding discussion left the impression that most couples have trouble with their in-laws. The small percentages in Table 15-1 should be reassuring in that respect. Most couples get along well with their relatives, one result being that they spend a great deal of time together. Indeed, as Table 15-2 shows, they spend far more time with relatives than with neighbors or other friends.

According to Table 15-2 the median married couple in Detroit sees at least one relative every week. In rural Michigan a companion study by

**Table 15-2—Frequency of Contact with Relatives, Neighbors, Co-Workers, and Other Friends**

Frequency of Contact	GROUP CONTACTED			
	Relatives	Neighbors	Co-Workers	Other Friends
Everyday or almost every day	29%	20%	1%	3%
Once or twice a week	38	25	8	22
Once or twice a month	20	17	20	43
Less often	13	14	30	24
Never	—	24	41	8
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of families	728	723	723	726

Adapted from Detroit Area Study, 1956. Source: Representative sample of Detroit Metropolitan area married women, interviewed in 1955.

Blood shows that relatives are visited even oftener (and other friends less).

Visiting takes place primarily between senior couples and their children and grandchildren. It is an extension, therefore, of the companionship parents cherish with their children while they are still at home.

Visiting takes place in both directions—from older to younger and younger to older, depending on ease of movement and facilities for hospitality. Where more than one sibling family lives in the same community, the house they grew up in is the natural meeting place, and so visiting tends to be from young to old.

Some visiting of parents by married children is motivated by a sense of obligation. Parents invest so much of themselves in their children that they create a debt children can hardly repay, no matter how often they visit them in their old age. Nevertheless, the bulk of this visiting seems to be voluntary. For most married couples parents and siblings hold high priority as preferred companions. They visit back and forth because they want to, not because they have to. In the process parents feel rewarded in affection, companionship, and attention for the money and effort they expended on their children over the years.

Detroit Area Study data show that families normally visit as total units. Husbands and wives rarely leave their children behind when they go visiting (and then mostly because of conflicts with bedtimes and other responsibilities, rather than by choice). Even more rarely is the spouse left behind as one partner visits his own side of the family. Our bilateral system does not mean that the husband participates in his kin group and the wife in hers, but rather both partners participate in both.

The norm governing participation is that it should be equilateral, other things being equal. If relatives are equally accessible, they expect equal contact. If they are not, longer vacation visits to the distant family are expected to balance shorter weekend visits to the close one.

In actual practice differing compatibility between units warps the

frequency of visiting. Nor are other factors often equal. An only child logically should visit home more often than a many-siblinged partner. A widowed or ill parent needs more visits too.

Visiting between parents and married children becomes as ritualized as other aspects of family living. One reason the most popular frequency in Table 15-2 is once or twice a week is that so much visiting occurs every weekend. With greater leisure available then, customs develop of going to church together or eating dinner together which are carried out like clockwork year after year.

**Table 15-3—Occasions for Large Family Gatherings in City and Country**

Occasion	FAMILY RESIDENCE	
	City	Country
Family ceremonial occasions		
Family reunions	10%	42%
Birthdays	25	31
Weddings, etc.	14	13
Mother's Day, Father's Day	3	18
Anniversaries	9	9
Funerals	8	9
Children's religious rituals, graduations	7	6
Holidays		
Christmas	34	37
Other religious holidays	7	37
National holidays	43	28
Social occasions	28	24
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total occasions	188	254
None	24	11
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	212%	265%
No. of families	724	178

Adapted from Blood and Axelrod, 1955. Source: Representative samples of married women in Detroit Metropolitan area and on Southeast Michigan farms. Totals add to more than 100% because families could mention more than one type of occasion.

While gatherings of the whole clan occur less often, they also tend to be ritualized (see Table 15-3). They center particularly around special days on the calendar, but familistic events like weddings and funerals bring the clan together too. Of all occasions in the year the Christmas season seems the most urgent time of family visiting in the United States:

Daddy's family all got together nearly every holiday but especially at Christmas, at which time they just wouldn't allow anyone to be absent. Only daddy liked the Swedish food: lute fish, potato sausage, and raisin pudding. This caused conflict every Christmas because no matter how much mother and we children wanted to do something different, daddy insisted that we not let his folks down.

This particular family, in transition from an ethnic cultural tradition, experienced culture conflict due to mixed backgrounds. Where

husband and wife share the same cultural tradition, clan rituals produce cohesiveness, recall childhood memories, and give a sense of continuity between past and future.

### ACCESSIBILITY

Two types of accessibility influence the extent of sociability in extended family networks. Geographical distance is more obvious, but social distance is often equally significant.

*Residential Propinquity.* Since the typical individual marries someone from the same community (see Chapter 3), the two sets of kinship networks usually focus in the same geographical area. Theoretically, our residential pattern for married couples is neolocal, but this does not mean that they go off to a new community to live. Rather they go off, if possible, to a new dwelling unit.

In contrast to the patrilocal system in primitive societies, Americans believe that marriage gets off to a better start in a separate household. The vast majority manage to implement this belief. The chief exceptions are very young couples so strapped financially that they take advantage of shelter offered by parents. When emergency living arrangements are necessary, couples are more apt to move in with the wife's parents than the husband's, thereby lessening the likelihood of culture conflict between wife and mother-in-law (Glick, 1957: 44).

Despite our high rate of geographical mobility, the typical married couple live in the same community with their parents. (In one Indiana county, the median distance from both sets of parents in the early 1940's was three miles—Locke, 1951: 122.) Other things being equal, most couples consider it advantageous to live near their families and childhood friends. Moving away sometimes improves vocational opportunities, but it worsens opportunities for family sociability. The greater the distance, the less the sociability.

What if husband and wife come from different communities? At first glance the equilateral principle implies compromising on a midway residence. However, if the distance is great enough, this cuts the couple off from sociability with both families. Hence, maximum value is more likely when couples settle near one set of parents (theoretically the wife's) and devote their vacations to visiting the alternate community.

*Social Distance.* We have often blamed cultural diversity as a source of strain in human relationships. The same principle applies in the area of kinship. Sociability is reduced whenever marriages link diverse networks or when couples abandon their networks.

Mixed marriages create impediments to easy sociability between the extended family and the "outlaw." As a result visiting is reduced in frequency or may not occur at all.

Nine months after the wedding, Joe, a Roman Catholic, gave up his childhood faith and joined the Episcopal church that Shirley belonged to. He was the first member of his entire blood relation to buck tradition and leave the Church of Rome. This hit his parents hard. For eleven months they would have nothing to do with their son.

Not until the baby was born did they come around, acting as if nothing had happened. By that time, however, permanent damage had been done. Joe and Shirley both still feel resentment toward his parents. To this day visits are very infrequent (not more than three or four a year), and they are not invited to any of the Mulligan family reunions.

Social distance may be caused as much by social mobility as by inter-marriage. When children move up the social scale (even with the parents' blessing), sociability becomes less congenial. The more stratified the community, the greater the barrier created by mobility. In Britain, the consequences are particularly apparent (see Table 15-4).

**Table 15-4—Contact between Married Men and Their Fathers  
by Occupational Mobility**

<i>Contact with Father</i>	OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY	
	<i>Mobile</i>	<i>Stable</i>
Within previous day	13%	29%
Within previous week	30	37
Not within previous week	57	34
Total	100%	100%
No. of families	76	49

Adapted from Willmott and Young, 1960: 83. Source: Middle-class London suburb, 1959.

That reduced contact due to social mobility is not unique to Great Britain is apparent from LeMaster's study (1954) of families of University of Wisconsin students. There too social mobility produces "a deterioration of the relationship between the mobile nuclear group and other groups of relatives less mobile."

Reduced contact between families of contrasting cultures is not only inevitable but also is an adjustive mechanism. Were such families to attempt to associate intimately, they would expose themselves to more tension and conflict. By avoiding one another, they reduce their difficulties and may even make it easier to maintain a minimum level of positive contact.

## Mutual Help in the Extended Family Networks

The essence of contact between families is purely sociable. When emergencies arise, however, kin are the first resource to which most people turn. Over the life cycle, help naturally balances out—as much

**Table 15-5—Types of Help Received, by Age of Wife**

Type of Help Received	AGE OF WIFE				Total
	Under 30	30-44	45-59	60+	
Baby-sitting	67%	54%	20%	10%	46%
Nursing care	60	54	41	24	50
Financial aid	53	36	18	20	34
Help with housework	32	25	24	15	26
Business advice or help in finding a job	29	20	11	8	20
Valuable gifts	10	8	11	30	11
Total	251%	197%	125%	107%	187%
No. of families	178	318	166	61	723

Adapted from Detroit Area Study, 1956: 17. Source: Representative sample of Detroit metropolitan area married women, 1955. Totals add to more than 100% because families may receive more than one type of help.

given as received. Newly married couples, however, are primarily on the receiving end (see Table 15-5).

Help, like sociability, is primarily exchanged between parents and children, and among married siblings—rarely between more distant kin. Nursing care is the most common type of help. Presumably it is provided most often when the wife herself is sick. It thereby compensates for one weakness in neolocal family systems—that no mother-substitute is available within the household. Young mothers also periodically depart to hospitals to have their babies. Then grandmothers come to the rescue of motherless households.

Even more frequent when children are small is mother-substituting for mothers who are *not* ill. Professional babysitters cost more than young couples can afford as often as they would like. So accessible grandmothers release their daughters and daughters-in-law from bondage to young children.

Free babysitting does not come without complications, however. The child-rearing methods of mother and grandmother are never identical, especially when the grandmother is one's mother-in-law. Usually, grandparents have a more indulgent relationship to their grandchildren than parents who are responsible for them all the time. Studies in a variety of cultures suggest that this is a general human tendency: adjacent generations normally tense and alternate generations lax. Though particular eras of change in child-rearing methods may reverse this generalization, some differences are to be expected from any babysitter, grandmother or otherwise.

Children occasionally are confused by inconsistent handling or try to play their handlers off against each other. But the net effect for all concerned from grandmother's services is usually positive. Indeed, to make such services readily available is a major argument for living near one's parents.

Help with housework is one of the few kinds that comes from siblings

as often as from parents. Perhaps it is the most physically strenuous, and therefore youngsters are better able to provide it. Again, however, it is young wives who receive the most help, since young children create the biggest messes.

The preceding types are all personal services of woman to woman and therefore appropriately matrilineal (that is, concentrated in the wife's kinship network). The remaining services are largely economic and correlated with the masculine role. Financial aid from the wife's family is liable to be interpreted as criticism of the husband's occupational ability. So, for sensitive egos aid comes better from the man's own family. Nevertheless, mature egos are able to receive as well as give and do not suspect the motives of those who would be generous. As one husband put it:

Because we travel this life but once, our pride and ego should not stand in the way of opportunities that are placed before us. No one lives on an island. No one is completely independent. Therefore, the husband should never prevent his family from pleasures of gifts bestowed upon them, no matter how small or how big. If he does object he is denying them a life a little fuller, a little brighter.

More than any other type of help, parents are the source of financial aid. This reflects the affluence of postparental couples. Given the highest income of a lifetime and lessened expenses, they are unusually able to help precisely when their married children are hardest pressed. Financial aid rarely takes the form of a regular subsidy, except in special cases when the husband is still in training. Normally it provides extra resources for unusual costs like purchasing or building a home (Sussman, 1953a).

The only exception to the general pattern that help flows primarily to young couples occurs with valuable gifts. The large number received by wives over sixty years old suggests that young couples often choose this means of expressing their appreciation for the other help they have received. Repayment is seldom expected to be financial, however. "In return for this assistance parents expected from their children continued affectional response, inclusion in some of their activities, and personal service and attention" (Sussman, 1953a).

#### RESPONSIBILITY FOR AGED PARENTS

Through most of the life cycle the main flow of help is from parents to children. But what happens when parents get old and feeble? Some parents never do—they "die with their boots on." But often they reach a point where even though they are financially independent, they need personal care and attention. Especially after the first partner dies, the survivor is apt to find living alone difficult or precarious.

The ideal solution is to move in with a married son or daughter. As



usual, living with a daughter is preferable since she is better prepared to cope with the stresses of caring for the aged than the average daughter-in-law. (In actual practice, American parents more often move in with a daughter than a son by a 55 to 45 ratio—Glick, 1957: 44.)

For most Americans of both generations merging households is a last resort, postponed as long as possible. Moving to the same community, the same neighborhood, or even a different apartment in the same building is preferred as long as it is feasible. Once closer care becomes necessary, moreover, the relationship between grandmother and her new family is enhanced by mutual respect for boundary lines. Grandmother's room should be her private castle even if she can't have a house of her own. Conversely, grandmother too needs to respect the integrity of the family with whom she is a guest (Duvall, 1954: 364).

Should senility wreak its worst havoc, however, the time comes when even a favorite daughter finds the strain too much. When mental deterioration means that an aged parent no longer recognizes who is taking care of her, a good nursing home is no loss to her, a relief to the family, and an adequate expression of their love.

When help for the aged extends beyond personal care to financial support, all the descendants deserve to share, according to their ability. The kinship network, after all, is the main place in life where true communism should prevail: from each according to his ability, to each according to his need.

## *Religion in Family Living*

According to the billboards "Families which pray together, stay together." According to researchers the billboards are right.

Religious families have a lower divorce rate than nonreligious families. Using church attendance as an index of religious activity, Locke finds that couples headed for divorce attend church much less than happily married couples. Especially in the latter half of marriage, couples in trouble drop out of church. However, even in the first half the two groups differ significantly (see Table 16-1).

In the second half of marriage the contrasts between happily married and divorcing couples widen as those in marital difficulty sever their church connections. Dropping out often reflects embarrassment over marital difficulty as well as decreasing willingness of the partners to do anything together. Theoretically, the church is designed to help people in trouble. But in actual practice they often feel so ashamed of their failings that they are unable to face the minister or congregation.

Even in the first half of marriage some of the lesser attendance by divorce-prone couples results from differences in compatibility. However, the bulk of the influence in Table 16-1 probably runs in the reverse direction. Fundamentally, church attendance fosters marital stability and nonattendance facilitates divorce. This is illustrated by the fact that Sunday School and church attendance *before* marriage lead to success in marriage (Burgess and Cottrell, 1939: 123-24).

**Table 16-1—Regularity of Church Attendance of Happily Married and Divorced Men and Women During the First Half of Marriage**

Monthly Attendance	MEN		WOMEN	
	Happily Married	Divorced	Happily Married	Divorced
Four or more times	31%	19%	44%	29%
Two or three times	23	12	14	13
Once or less	28	35	30	28
None	18	34	12	30
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of cases	165	162	167	186

Adapted from Locke, 1951: 241. Source: Cross sections of an Indiana County, 1939-44.

Thus, religion is related to stability in marriage, that is, to avoiding divorce. Usually, factors that prevent divorce also promote success among nondivorcing couples. Hence, we should expect church members to have the most successful marriages and not simply to have scruples against divorce.

**Table 16-2—Marital Happiness of Wife, by Frequency of Husband's and Wife's Church Attendance**

Wife's Evaluation of Marriage	CHURCH ATTENDANCE			
	Both Regular	Both Occasional	Both Never	Wife Occasional Husband Never
Exceptionally or very happy	91%	79%	62%	55%
Fairly happy	8	19	32	33
Unhappy or very unhappy	1	2	6	12
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of couples	120	479	269	170

Adapted from Chesser, 1957: 279. Source: Women patients of English physicians.

Table 16-2 demonstrates that church attendance is closely related to marital happiness for wives. Since religion matters more to the average woman than to the average man, the correlation for husbands is not quite so high. Nevertheless, marital satisfaction for husbands too is associated with regular church attendance (Burchinal, 1957).

Table 16-2 also shows, however, that the unhappiest marriages are not those that are the least religious but rather those that are religiously incompatible, that is, where one partner fails to share the other's religious interests. This suggests an important qualification: *religion contributes to marital stability and success only insofar as it is shared by husband and wife*. Sharing involves both identification with a common faith and joint participation. If either is missing, religion becomes a disintegrative force in family relations (as described in Chapter 3). Conversely, the more actively husband and wife participate jointly in the same faith, the greater the family solidarity and happiness.

One more qualification is necessary. Landis (1960) finds that these relationships apply to Protestants and Catholics but not to Jews. The Jewish community has a high degree of marital stability and happiness but a very low degree of religious activity. [Lenski (1961: 33, 48) points out that "In the case of Judaism we are confronted with a group in which the religious associations have been seriously weakened" and predicts that "... the synagogues of Detroit could be virtually deserted in another generation, except on High Holy Days."] Within the Jewish community, the usual relationships between religious interest and family vitality are not clearly manifested. Apparently Jewish communalism—strong today despite the decline of Judaism—is able to provide families with the support religious associations supply to Christian families.

With these important exceptions religion promotes marital success. *How* it does so is another question. Unfortunately, the answers have yet to be studied scientifically. Meanwhile, we can postulate three main contributions: religious rituals in the home, religious institutions in the community, and religious ethics.

## Religious Rituals in the Home

Bossard and Boll (1950: 201) find that rituals of any kind promote family integration and pride. Though their definition includes secular rituals as well, religious rituals offer rich potentialities to family living. Less common in the American home today than in the past, religious rituals nevertheless give those who still practice them a sense of participating in a common pattern of meaningful activity.

### GRACE AT MEALS

The most frequent religious ritual is grace before meals. [It is regularly practiced in 70 per cent of the Protestant families studied by Fairchild and Wynn (1961: 184).] The form, of course, varies from faith to faith and family to family. For some grace means silent meditation, holding hands around the table. For others it means a chorus of singing together, a time-worn recital by a child, or a spontaneous prayer by a parent.

The most tangible consequence of grace before meals is to coordinate the family eating pattern. To be sure, grace-less families may equally rule that eating is taboo until all are seated. However, grace promotes coordination. When all eat together, the possibilities of conversation around the dinner table increase.

Mothers, especially, are integrated into the family circle when all wait until she finishes serving before even the hungriest child may plunge

in. When guests are present their inclusion in this ritual creates a sense of belonging in the family circle.

#### FAMILY WORSHIP

Family worship is more time-consuming than grace and more difficult to find time for in the press of urban life. (Only 5 per cent of Fairchild and Wynn's Protestant families manage it regularly—p. 185.)

The gathering of the family around the table for meals is a logical occasion for worship before or afterwards. Extensive worship before meals is difficult for maidless mothers to share and taxes the patience of the young. After dinner in the evening offers greater leisure for reading the Bible or other meaningful literature, for singing hymns, or saying prayers. Open-ended leisure allows families to shift easily from moods of worship to family decision-making and problem-solving.

The spread in ages from oldest to youngest child is difficult for family activities to encompass. Sometimes separate occasions of worship for older and younger children can be more meaningful. As families move through the life cycle, new patterns become useful, so flexibility and a willingness to experiment are desirable.

Families that fail to find regular worship meaningful may nevertheless turn to group reflection in serious crises. The illness or death of a loved one, the loss of a job or a failed course in school—any severe frustration or tragedy—can be an occasion for spiritual deepening for families that pause to explore its meaning.

#### FESTIVAL RITUALS

Just as High Holy Days bring to the synagogue those who otherwise never attend services, so families that otherwise never have religious activities at home, ceremonialize their family life at the festive seasons of the year.

Family traditions for celebrating special days appeal especially to children. Sometimes they come down from previous generations through husband or wife. Sometimes they are borrowed from the example of friends or TV strangers. Sometimes they are invented—intentionally or accidentally. No matter what their source, traditions for celebrating Christmas and Easter or the Jewish equivalents add excitement and variety to the pattern of family living.

### Religious Participation in the Community

Churches are composed of families. More than any other institution, they view the family as their basic unit. Families have their own pews.

Husbands and wives are expected to attend services together. Men's, women's, and children's organizations serve the whole family. The clergyman calls on the family at home. Families are listed on the parish rolls. As a result of such familistic emphases, church participation promotes family welfare.

External support is provided in three ways: (1) participation is a joint family activity; (2) the church provides a supporting network of primary relations for families; (3) the clergyman is a therapeutic resource in time of trouble. (The last point was emphasized in Chapter 12 so it needs no reiteration now.)

#### CHURCH PARTICIPATION AS A FAMILY ACTIVITY

Since interaction is the stuff of human relationships, any joint activity strengthens the family provided it is mutually rewarding. Particularly when families leave their home base (where each member has his separate distractions) and go out into the community together, they achieve a sense of identity as a family. The more regular and frequent the expeditions, the greater the effect.

Church activities aren't unique in this regard. Friday evening expeditions to the swimming pool have similar effects. Yet this is one by-product of church attendance—provided the whole family go together.

Church participation is not uniform over the life cycle. Couples who stay home when they are first married begin participating when they have children, despite the mobility handicaps small children present. As children grow older, church participation by parents reaches a peak (Anders, 1955). Sometimes the children themselves ("contaged" by their playmates) drag their parents to church. More often parents take the initiative in resuming church-going as part of their sense of responsibility for their children. After the children are "launched," parents whose chief motivation was their religious instruction disengage themselves from church activities once more. Thus churches and families are most closely allied during the child-rearing years.

#### INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILY LIFE

Church participation differs from pure recreation by linking families into a network of other families with similar values. In minority faiths and small, intimate congregations, a substantial proportion of family friends are drawn from the church (Zimmerman and Cervantes, 1960: 184). Such friends interact throughout the week, as well as on Sundays, reinforcing each other's values. Their network of primary relationships provides social control, encouraging good behavior and discouraging irresponsibility.

For mobile families "often the church constitutes the one familiar spot in an otherwise strange community" (Fairchild and Wynn, p. 199). The church is therefore a point of entrée into the community for families on the move. This is especially true for Catholics, since the whole country is divided into parishes to which they automatically belong. For Protestants the problem is more complex if their old denomination does not exist in this new community. However, most Protestants hold their denominational ties so lightly that they move easily into the most accessible church with an attractive minister and a flourishing Sunday School. Indeed, many suburbs develop "united" churches which appeal to all sorts of liberal Protestants (Whyte, 1957: 420-21). Either way the local church's latchstring is out, providing a quick means of integration into the community for newcomer families who take advantage of it.

Even in large, impersonal congregations the fact of belonging involves a commitment to familistic values. Active attendance produces a growing sense of identification with the institution and the values for which it stands.

Hence, both informally and formally, as a group and as an institution, the church provides a bulwark of external support for families.

## Religious Ethics

What are the values for which religion stands? Religion is concerned with the way family members treat each other. It is also concerned with the entire human community.

### NORMS OF FAMILY BEHAVIOR

Religion is concerned with the way people treat each other—within the family as well as elsewhere. Most of the ethical content of religion originated in the family. References in religious literature to the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man use family analogies. Religion says that one should treat every man as though he were a member of one's family. The converse of this admonition is that one should treat the members of one's family as they *ought* to be treated.

Religious ethics involve ideals about human behavior. In the Old Testament they are codified into commandments relevant to family life: "Honor thy father and thy mother." "Thou shalt not commit adultery." In the New Testament they are summarized in the great commandment "Love your neighbor."

Love is the beginning of marriage, the essence of family life. Yet as we have seen, it is not always the end of marriage, nor as we shall see, of

life with children. The love of man for woman tends to fade, the love of brother for brother to sour. Hence family members need constant reminders that though we fail, we need to try again.

Religion is a reminder. The church is an institution devoted to the propagation of love. Not family love alone, to be sure, but love within the family as much as anywhere else. In sermons and religious classes the church teaches love. The teachings come in different forms but spell out the requirements of personal relationships: *Fidelity*—"What God has joined, let no man put asunder." *Responsibility*—"Bear ye one another's burdens." *Forgiveness*—"First be reconciled to thy brother." Things to do and things not to do that heighten the quality of family living.

So high is the idealism of religion that no family ever attains it. Religion asks a "summit" experience of I-Thou relationships, the pure essence of personal relations. Yet even though unattainable, lofty goals influence the behavior of those who take them seriously. They encourage the effort to do better and chill the temptation to be irresponsible.

Besides teaching idealism, religion makes another contribution to relationships within the family. Insofar as religion is real, it introduces a third Person into dyadic relationships. Just as a professional counselor has a reconciling influence on marital conflict, so awareness of God provides a new perspective. The change from dyad to triad dilutes the polarization of conflict between husband and wife.

In the dynamics of the divine-human relationship comes not only a new perspective on family conflict but also grace to forgive and be healed. Then love is not just an abstract ideal to be striven for but a divine gift strengthening the resolve and the ability to do right by those with whom we live most intimately.

#### THE FAMILY IS NOT AN END IN ITSELF

In the late 1950's a Cleveland disk jockey who had accepted kickbacks from manufacturers for playing their records exonerated his behavior by saying he had done it for his family, not for himself. I suppose he was right in feeling that family selfishness is not quite so primitive as individual selfishness. Yet religion has a broader perspective—the whole human race, past, present, and future. This means that men have obligations beyond their families and that families too have obligations beyond themselves.

This broader perspective transcends *role* conflict in a fashion analogous to religion's transcendence of *marital* conflict. If all of life is in God's hands, I need not feel that I must choose between family responsibility and community responsibility and that every minute I devote to one is a loss to the other. With a religious perspective life can find a higher integration in terms of ultimate purposes.



Most religious men and women will conclude that they ought to take time away from their family to devote to others. Sometimes that time is spent in small chunks for local service. Sometimes it severs family ties for months or years on end under arduous circumstances (though the civilizing of the world requires this less and less often; today, wives and children can survive in the remotest wilds provided human societies don't get too wild). As long as the whole family share the same transcendent values, separation need not be divisive.

Religion also makes claims upon our money. The biblical minimum is 10 per cent, though only the devout and the wealthy manage to share this much. Nevertheless, the standard is there, and those who take their religion seriously feel an obligation to others' children as well as their own.

**Table 16-3—Gifts and Contributions to Individuals and Organizations, by Family Income**

Mean Income	NET FAMILY INCOME AFTER TAXES			
	\$5,000-5,999	\$6,000-7,499	\$7,500-9,999	\$10,000+
Contributions to Individuals outside the household	\$5,447	\$6,630	\$8,350	\$17,055
Gifts (Christmas, etc.)	\$ 78	\$ 88	\$125	\$ 303
Money for subsistence	40	57	117	454
Contributions to Organizations				
Religious	68	81	108	215
Charitable	17	21	35	194
Educational, political, etc.	8	23	16	170
Total	\$211	\$270	\$401	\$1,336
Percentage of Net Income Contributed to Individuals and Organizations	3.9%	4.1%	4.8%	7.8%

Adapted from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Volume XI (1957), 292. Source: Families living in large northern cities, 1950 (mean age of husband, 45-49).

Chapter 14 showed that the average American family devotes less than 5 per cent of its income to gifts and contributions of all kinds. Table 16-3 shows that when these gifts are broken down, the majority go to the extended family, a modest share to the family church, and only a tiny fraction farther afield. To be sure, some of the church budget goes to benevolences too, but the greater share purchases a kind of consumer service for the family. In short the average family in the United States—the richest and perhaps the most religious country on earth—manage to expend the vast majority of their financial resources on themselves.

One other possibility remains. Families may give *themselves* to the service of others—not just their time or their money. Parents and children can supplement the giving of money by making gifts of practical

or psychological value to others. More importantly, the home itself can provide hospitality to those in need of friendship. The foreign student, the patient released from a mental hospital, the lonely widow—these are the people whom religion bids us befriend. “I was a stranger and ye took me in. . . .”

# *Companionship*

## *in Leisure*

Since 1900 the average working week has shrunk from sixty hours to forty, and from six days to five. Paid vacations have become commonplace even for factory workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1959: 197). Labor-saving devices and prepared foods are available to housewives. The net result is that ordinary married couples have almost as much leisure today as Veblen's celebrated "leisure class" of a few generations ago.

The availability of leisure (and of increasing funds to spend on it) poses new questions for marriage: How much leisure should be spent together and how much separately? What part does companionship play in modern marriage?

### The Place of Companionship in Marriage

Elite marriages in feudal societies segregate the sexes so sharply that husband and wife rarely do anything together except have sexual relations. Even sex in many feudal families is concentrated on concubines and mistresses (Levy, 1949).

By contrast, in modern marriages companionship is the central feature. Given a choice of five aspects of marriage and asked to pick the most

valuable, urban and rural wives in Michigan overwhelmingly choose companionship (see Table 17-1).

**Table 17-1—The Most Valuable Part of Marriage for Farm Wives and City Wives**

<i>Most Valuable Part of Marriage</i>	<i>Farm Wives</i>	<i>City Wives</i>
Companionship in doing things together with the husband	55%	48%
The chance to have children	23	26
The husband's understanding of the wife's problems and feelings	11	13
The husband's expression of love and affection	9	10
The standard of living—the kind of house, clothes, car, etc.	2	3
Total	100%	100%
No. of families	173	724

Adapted from the author's 1955 Detroit Area Study and companion rural research project. Source: Representative samples of Metropolitan Detroit families and Southeast Michigan farm families.

To be sure, the list of alternatives in Table 17-1 is not exhaustive. Nor do we know whether husbands prize companionship as much. (Husbands probably put more emphasis on sex at the expense of other aspects of marriage.) Nevertheless, because companionship is so prominent in Table 17-1, it seems fairly safe to infer that it is the most valued aspect of marriage for both sexes.

The centrality of companionship results from our system of courtship. Since couples marry after months and years of companionship in dating, it naturally follows that their conception of marriage stresses it too.

Though Americans normally restrict the term "dating" to unmarried couples, it is applied by Britishers to married couples as well. When married couples leave their children behind and go out to have a good time, the experience recapitulates premarital dating—whether the term is used or not.

#### DATING AFTER MARRIAGE

Marriage slashes the proportion of a couple's time devoted to dating. Before marriage couples seldom see each other except on dates. Afterwards the bulk of their time together is devoted to routine activities such as eating, sleeping, and household tasks. Husband and wife may be in the same room but with their attention more on the task at hand than on each other. In leisure much time is devoted to separate activities or to joint activities with the concentration on the recreational task. Even if couples spent as large an *amount* of time dating after marriage as before, the *proportion* of it focused on one another's presence would be greatly reduced.

In actual practice dating dwindles after marriage. Couples who spent

every possible minute before marriage going places and doing things, no longer find it necessary. Since they live together, dating ceases to be a means of bringing them together. On the contrary, it becomes a means of escaping from the routine of everyday married living.

*Contrasting Roles.* The need to escape varies with the partners' external roles. Husbands and wives who have challenging or exhausting occupational or volunteer responsibilities feel little need to leave home in the evening. The normal division of labor, which gives the husband more external experience than it does the wife, frequently is a source of strain in marriage. To the husband who has been in the bustle of business all day, a quiet evening in front of the TV seems inviting. But the lady of the house has seen too much of the same four walls and is eager to go places and do things:

After I've worked all day at home, I wish Floyd would take me to the symphony, ballet, or opera, but he never does. He says he likes to spend his evenings at home with me—at first I was flattered, but after four years I've had too much of a good thing!

Differential external participation creates incompatible recreational needs. The husband's need for rest is just as real as the wife's need to escape. When needs conflict, what principle can be invoked? To compromise would mean going out half as often as the wife wishes. In practice, no wife would expect to have her wishes met every time. Nevertheless, if the choice is between activity and passivity, between doing something and doing nothing, there is much to be said for doing something. Resolving conflicts in favor of activity produces a strenuous life, but in the original Latin, life is synonymous with vitality.

Given the choice between the need for activity and the need for rest, more effort is required of the spouse to meet the former need. The latter requires only self-control—and frustration. Given their contrasting leisure-time needs, it seems likely that the net gain to a dated housewife in personal pleasure and to her husband in appreciation for his effort would outweigh the gain to an undisturbed husband in personal rest and to his wife in appreciation for not pressing her point. In extreme cases, to be sure, the husband's fatigue is so great and the wife's boredom so trivial that the balance tips the other way. Ordinarily, however, the contrast seems better settled on the active side.

*The Need for Love.* A second reason for preferring strenuous solutions is what it does for the marriage. Dating means doing something together, whereas staying home usually means doing little or nothing. Moreover, dating means doing something with special connotations. Since dating before marriage produced the climactic love of courtship, dating after marriage revives memories of a treasured past. If this were all it did, however, it might only make married couples bitterly nostalgic. More important, dating revives and re-creates love. When husband and

wife go out to dinner together or to a movie or whatever their preferred recreation, the conditions are provided for the growth of love: concentrated attention and interaction with one another.

Before marriage couples often are criticized for being too wrapped up in each other. After marriage the danger is that the demands and distractions of life will prevent husband and wife from paying enough attention to each other. This is the disengagement that creates problems in maintaining personal relationships over the long haul. In solving this problem, the exclusiveness of dating gives each partner a feeling of still being appreciated and loved as a person:

Although our recreational activities are fewer now than they were when we were engaged, we still find much companionship in square dancing, canoeing, camping, and hiking together. We seem to enjoy these things even more than before we were married, because now we are less self-conscious and less intent on impressing each other, and can enjoy the sport and each other that much more.

#### DOMESTICATED LEISURE

Even though dating has a crucial role after marriage, it fills only a tiny fraction of the total leisure time available. The balance of this chapter is devoted to the remainder—leisure together at home, leisure shared with friends, and leisure spent apart from each other in separate interests.

The greater part of married companionship is found in recreational activities at home. Indeed, the happiest marriages depend the least on dating-type activities. Table 17-2, which ranks activities in terms of the proportion of couples engaging in them, probably gives a rough notion of the proportion of time the typical couple devotes to them.

The data in Table 17-2 are fragmentary and do not total 100 per cent horizontally because of gaps in the published statistics. Nevertheless, they suggest patterns worth considering even though they aren't conclusively demonstrated by the data at hand.

*Popular Activities.* The three most popular activities are listening to the radio, music, and reading. Since Locke's study was made, television has replaced radio as the chief source of mutual enjoyment. Although music is somewhat ambiguous as to location, watching TV, listening to a radio, and reading are all fireside activities. Almost every home can afford such forms of companionship. None of them involves much attention to the partner as such. Rather, they are parallel activities couples engage in side by side, he reading his newspaper and she, her magazine. As long as both enjoy reading, the activity is harmless enough. Indeed, it may stimulate occasional conversations. These activities, however, are not of the romantic sort advocated before. I emphasize the contrast not because

**Table 17-2—Mutual and Unilateral Leisure-Time Enjoyment Reported by Happily Married and Divorced Men and Women**

Activity	Mutual	PARTNERS' ENJOYMENT		
		Husband Only	Wife Only	Neither
Listening to the radio				
Happily married couples	90%	3%*	6%†	2%*
Divorced couples	75	9*	12†	8*
Music				
Happily married couples	89	4*	1†	4†
Divorced couples	75	10*	22†	10†
Reading				
Happily married couples	72	9	12†	—
Divorced couples	46	20	38†	—
Movies				
Happily married couples	68	—	5	17*
Divorced couples	72	—	13	7*
Parties				
Happily married couples	57	1	4*	24†
Divorced couples	46	7	11*	45†
Sports				
Happily married couples	54	20*	3†	22†
Divorced couples	36	35*	15†	32†
Playing cards				
Happily married couples	39	8	—	36*
Divorced couples	45	21	—	24*
Dancing				
Happily married couples	25	2	7	45*
Divorced couples	38	9	21	24*
Drinking				
Happily married couples	7	10	1*	42
Divorced couples	19	38	8*	28
Gambling				
Happily married couples	2	10†	—	—
Divorced couples	3	40†	—	—

\* Reported by husband.

† Reported by wife.

Unstarred percentages are averages for husbands' and wives' reports combined.

"Neither" column means that both partners are "indifferent" to the activity.

Adopted from Locke, 1951: 257-60.

reading and TV should be abolished. They are properly (from the standpoint of time- and money-cost) the basic stuff of married companionship. Dating, by contrast, is the "frosting on the cake," not the chief activity for even the most romantic couples. This shift in the allocation of leisure activity from face-to-face to parallel activity underlies much of the qualitative transformation in the relationship between man and woman that marriage brings. This is the sense in which romanticists say "marriage is the enemy of love."

Though domestic leisure occupies first place, Table 17-2 shows that married couples don't stay home all the time. Movies, parties, and sports

events are mutual attractions for more than half the happily married couples (and, in the case of movies, for the divorce-prone couples too). While none of these dating activities is universal, the chances are that every happily married couple will find mutual enjoyment in at least one of them from time to time. Lest anyone think going to the movies increases the danger of divorce, I hasten to add that this difference is not statistically significant, whereas mutual *indifference* to movies is significantly greater among the happily married.

The last four activities in Table 17-2 are not easily domesticated. In each case mutual indifference is more auspicious than mutual enjoyment. Even so, a good many couples manage to integrate card-playing and dancing with successful marriage. Hence, there is no reason to black-list those activities altogether. It may be, however, that these present hazards to which incompatible couples fall prey. In some circles card-playing is practically synonymous with gambling. When the game is highly competitive, husband and wife may be pitted against each other or worse yet teamed up in such a way that blunders cause trouble:

I really enjoy playing bridge as long as I don't have to play with Art. I'm not really a bad player, but every once in a while I bid more conservatively than he thinks I should and he just explodes. Any other partner he'll forgive but he says I should know better because he's instructed me so many times.

The danger in dancing probably lies in its romantic nature. As long as husband and wife dance together, *their* romance is promoted, but once they change partners, *other* romances may occur, estranging partners through jealousy (or sometimes the lack of it!).

Drinking and gambling, Chapter 11 suggested, are major causes of divorce. They are more often unilateral masculine interests than mutual leisure-time activities.

*Compatibility of Interests.* The most striking feature of Table 17-2 is the fact that every comparison between divorced and happily married couples in the two middle columns shows more onesided interests among the divorced. Some of this must be discounted because divorced people in retrospect exaggerate their differences in controversial areas. (For example, 56 per cent of Locke's divorced women said the husband alone enjoyed drinking, whereas only 20 per cent of the husbands confessed to this.) Nevertheless, the least we can say is that unilateral leisure-time interests tend to be involved in divorce conflicts. Beyond this we can infer from the undomesticated items at the bottom of Table 17-2 that while mutual interests in cards, dancing, drinking, or gambling are dangerous enough, unilateral interests are likely to lead to disaster. In every case the difference between divorced and happily married couples is greater when interest is onesided than when it is mutual.

Unilateral interest in the remaining areas is probably less negative in



its repercussions. To be sure, unilateralism by definition contributes nothing directly to the marriage relationship. On the other hand, separate interests are tolerable provided they are not considered immoral and do not threaten the marriage relationship or squander the family's resources. The four undomesticated activities suffer on all these counts. Those with conservative moral views consider all four inherently sinful. Hence if only the partner enjoys any of them, he is subject to condemnation. More tangibly, the financial resources of the family are jeopardized by drinking as a consumption expense and by the threat of alcoholism to the husband's wage-earning capacity. Gambling, with or without the benefit of cards, is a similar financial hazard. Dancing, as we have already mentioned, threatens the marriage bond, especially if the wife goes dancing alone (a rare but particularly disastrous activity).

Compatibility of interests, therefore, is always preferable to incompatibility. However, some leisure-time interests reinforce marriage more than others. In particular cases these generalizations may call more for restraint in the way an activity is pursued than for its elimination altogether. However, just as alcoholics must abstain because of the weakness of their defenses, so weak marriages may have to abandon some pleasures entirely if they are to avoid collapse.

#### SOCIABILITY

The kind of people who make the best marriage partners also make friends most easily. Before marriage they have many friends of both sexes. After marriage they maintain old friendships not severed by mobility and make new ones as they encounter new people. Marriage, therefore, is not an exclusive relationship in the sense that it eliminates all other friendships. Rather, it is the most intimate and durable of friendships.

Just as marriage links two kinship networks, it also links two networks of friends—the husband's and the wife's friends. Husbands and wives with the ability to establish good personal relations gradually get to know each other's friends so that more and more they become common friends.

Table 17-3 shows that happily married couples are more apt to share many friends whereas divorce-destined couples more often know few of each others' friends.

There is one catch in this proposition, however. The fewer friends the partner has, the easier it is to know them all. This is one reason the *proportion* of friends held in common rises in old age when friendship circles narrow (Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 159). The healthiest state of affairs, therefore, is not a closed circle of jointly acquired friends but rather open circles of friends with easy access to one another. New

**Table 17-3—Number of Common Friends During Marriage for Happily Married and Divorced Couples**

Number of Common Friends During Marriage	MARITAL STATUS AT TIME OF INTERVIEW	
	Happily Married	Divorced
Many	40%	25%
Several	42	33
A few	17	32
Almost none	1	10
Total	100%	100%

Adapted from Locke, 1951: 234-35, by averaging reports from 929 male and female respondents.

friendships need not begin mutually, but in companionate marriages sooner or later both partners meet and get to know the friends of the other. In compatible marriages people who appeal to one partner appeal to the other too. So getting to know the partner's friends normally leads to joint friendships.

Opportunities to interact do not always develop, however, so friendship networks seldom coincide completely. Especially with his own sex, each partner moves in circles partially removed from the other. As a result of this segregation pattern, men have more male than female friends, and vice versa.

**Table 17-4—Number of Men Friends and Women Friends during Marriage Reported by Happily Married and Divorced Men and Women**

Number of Friends during Marriage	Men Friends				Women Friends			
	HUSBAND'S		WIFE'S		HUSBAND'S		WIFE'S	
	Married	Divorced	Married	Divorced	Married	Divorced	Married	Divorced
Many or several	87%	74%	56%	31%	64%	52%	86%	64%
A few or almost none	13	26	44	69	36	48	14	36
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Adapted from Locke, 1951: 232-34. Source: 200 happily married couples and 201 divorced couples plus additional one-partner-only reports.

Table 17-4 shows the combined effects of the personal sociability and the mutual companionship of happily married couples. They have more friends of their own sex, and more friends of the opposite sex than unhappily married couples.

*Cross-Sex Friendships.* To a considerable extent opposite-sex friends are met through the spouse or met with the spouse—couple to couple. Unanswered in Table 17-4 is how many opposite-sex friends are unshared with the spouse. We have already pointed out that happily married couples tend to share their friends with each other. They also tend to acquire opposite-sex friends jointly because they do many things to-

gether. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether they consider sharing a *sine qua non* of cross-sex friendships. Before marriage they made friends easily with the opposite sex, and they undoubtedly continue to do so after marriage. Unlike "authoritarian personalities" they are not prejudiced against the opposite sex nor rigidly segregated in their social life (Adorno, *et al.*, 1950). They are not afraid of mixed company nor embarrassed to find themselves the only man in a group of women, or vice versa.

Hence, we suspect that people who make good marriages make friendships easily with persons of either sex. Does this mean there are no dangers in unshared cross-sex friendships? Triangular divorces show the potential dynamite involved. To avoid them, clear-cut distinctions must be drawn between friendship and marriage, or, more precisely, between friendship and intimacy. If cross-sex friendships are to be integrated successfully with marriage, they must be limited in their degree of intensity and involvement.

The very multiplicity of cross-sex friends for happily married individuals decreases the likelihood of overinvolvement with any one. The greatest danger to marriage occurs when one special friend becomes an alternate resource to the marriage partner, or worse yet an ally against the partner. When a man complains about his wife to another woman and seeks her sympathy, he is a long way down the road to remarriage. By his criticisms he publicly destroys the "fiction of solidarity" Waller and Hill (1951: 514) believe is "a master symptom of alienation" from the wife. By his plea for sympathy he flings open the door to a new affair. In both respects he crosses the boundary line between safe and hazardous cross-sex friendships.

The fiction of solidarity is also destroyed by those few men (and even fewer women) who remove their wedding rings to date unsuspecting partners. To get away with this pretense requires the anonymity of urban environments. In rural communities knowledge of everybody's comings and goings powerfully controls deviant behavior. Even in the modern suburb, Whyte labels the deadend courtyard "the greatest invention since the chastity belt":

. . . it's almost impossible to philander without everyone's knowing about it. One's callers are observed, and if neighbors feel there is anything untoward, suburbia's phenomenal grapevine will speed the news. This is not mere venom; in a web of relationships as delicate as that of a court an affair can harm not only two marriages, it can upset the whole court appletart. (1957: 393-94.)

A web of relationships provides a buffer to marital stability. Attempts to escape this web through secrecy are a sure sign of immorality. As long as cross-sex friendships are openly conducted, there is little to fear, save in those rare circles where the whole group goes mad with wife-swapping.

*Joint Sociability.* One of the sharper changes from courtship is the increased popularity of double-dating after marriage. Whereas before marriage the most precious commodity is privacy, afterward sociability extends beyond the dyad to group activity with other couples.

In high-status circles business is mixed with pleasure and entertaining of colleagues and clients becomes a major activity. Lower down the social scale the neighborhood and kinship network set narrower limits to sociability. Blood and Wolfe (p. 169) point out, however, that this class difference has broader causes than mere monetary ones:

. . . job-oriented visiting should not be attributed to mercenary motives alone. Top occupational personnel have such specialized occupational roles that congenial companions are apt to be found only within their select group. Where almost any neighbor will do for a factory worker, specialists tend to be choosier and may go long distances for leisure-time companionship.

Regardless of social class, families tend to develop circles of friends who perform the same supportive function which Whyte describes for the court groupings of Park Forest. In a study of six American cities, Zimmerman and Cervantes (1960) found that most families are surrounded socially by a persistent grouping of other families who share the same values. By associating together, they experience the satisfactions that come from compatibility within the group and the protection that comes from solidarity against outsiders whose values differ. They also found, moreover, the greater the compatibility of these family sociability groups (in class, religion, kinship, and region of origin), the lower the divorce rate (p. 76). The same compatibilities that promote marital stability when applied to husband and wife alone reinforce that stability when extended to a larger social environment. Provided couples choose compatible friends, therefore, leisure-time sociability can be a major source of strength to marriage relationships.

To summarize the place of companionship in marriage, it is central. No other activity is so crucial to the vitality of the husband-wife relationship. No other aspect of marriage is valued so highly. Every marriage worthy of the name needs to devote a substantial share of leisure time to joint recreation. Whether exclusive or sociable, whether at home or "abroad" matters little. But marriage without some sharing of interests lacks the basis for continued appreciation and enjoyment of one another.

## The Place of Individuality in Marriage

Perhaps everyone agrees that married couples need to spend *some* time together. But the obverse question is more difficult—should they spend *all* of it together?

## THE ROMANTIC IDEAL

In the full flush of romance couples dream of merging their lives together. "The twain shall become one flesh"—usually applied to sexual communion—is extended further into singleness of mind and purpose: common attitudes, common interests, common thinking. They expect to feel disappointed if their spouse should differ with them—especially in public. Their idea of marriage has no room for lasting differences. Diverse interests and views should be worked at until common ground is established. Separate friends and separate activities must be abandoned with bachelorhood. Marriage should function as a united front.

Most "marriage prediction tests" similarly imply that complete unification in marriage is desirable. To get the maximum score, couples must engage in all conventional activities together (Locke, 1951: 333-34).

Carried to its logical conclusion, however, the merging of personalities loses its attractiveness:

Before her marriage, Charlotte was a person of many and varied interests. She loved music and read widely. In short, she was an interesting person. Then she married. She was very much in love with Tad, so when at first she started acting and thinking like him, it was "cute." But then the situation reached a point where it became heartbreaking to her friends and relatives. She no longer talked to them from her own point of view. She now said "Tad thinks this" or "My husband says that" even in matters of the smallest importance. She seemed to lose the power to become angry in her own right. She no longer said "I was so mad," as she had many times before, but now she said "My husband was so mad." In short, she has reached a point where she no longer has any individuality.

## COOPERATIVE INDIVIDUALITY

An alternative ideal would be to balance unity and individuality. This ideal was expressed by the poet Gibran\* when he said:

But let there be spaces in your togetherness,  
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.  
Love one another, but make not a bond of love:  
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.  
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.  
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.  
Sing and dance together and be joyous,  
but let each one of you be alone,  
Even as the strings of a lute are alone  
though they quiver with the same music.

This poetry values the cooperation of interdependent persons in marriage, not their "blending" into one.

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*Individual Freedom.* One implication of continuing individuality is the need for mutual respect and personal privacy after marriage. This is symbolized by leaving the partner's mail to be opened by him rather than blithely assuming that now that we're married, all mail is for *us*.

Similarly, marriage need not end all individual activities and friendships. Husbands who feel obligated to give up their good times with "the boys" find the atmosphere of marriage stifling instead of invigorating:

I wanted to go to the office ballgames on Wednesday nights, but my wife always manages to interfere so I never have any liberty. I'd like to go with the fellows to the fights too, but she complains about that. You can't go out together all the time!

If there were no differences between masculine and feminine leisure-time interests, we could expect men interested in baseball and boxing to marry women with the same interests. Since the sexes differ substantially in their interests, there just aren't enough feminine ball and fight fans to go around. Nor are there enough hunters, football players, and poker players. To reverse the problem, there aren't enough males to match female interests in art, music, poetry, and drama. To make matters worse, some recreational organizations are closed to the opposite sex:

We submit that tavern society is still basically a man's world. The world of the Elks Club, the American Legion, the Moose, are basically male worlds. Luncheon clubs, athletic clubs, veterans' organizations, hunting clubs—all these, within limits, illustrate a way of life that is essentially masculine in our society. (LeMasters, 1957: 489.)

Similarly, the League of Women Voters, the Garden Club, and the Junior League are off limits to even the most talented husbands.

As a result, scrupulous adherence to the romantic ideal would eliminate large segments of American recreational activity. We know perfectly well that most married men and women don't make these sacrifices. The only question is whether they should.

If Gibran is right about spaces in togetherness, they shouldn't. From the sociological point of view separate activities threaten marriage only when they engulf the whole of a man's leisure, leaving none for his wife. Only when the husband's gang activities exclude all marital companionship is the wife justifiably resentful:

All summer long Cliff has spent every Saturday afternoon playing golf with some of the other V.P.'s and it annoys me. Not that I want to take his fun away from him. It's just that I like to play too, and he never pays any attention to me. It makes me feel gypped and cheated. On our vacation last week, when he suggested a game to me I nearly fell over. I think we both had a whale of a good time. I know I did.

This wife didn't want to play golf with her husband *all* the time—only *some* of it. After he plays with her for a change, she should be able to accept the following Saturday's separation more easily.

The basic issue is not whether the spouse should have no freedom at all versus complete freedom to do as he wishes, but rather how to balance individual freedom and joint activities. Some indication that moderation is not inconsistent with marital happiness is seen in Locke's research (1951: p. 252): almost half of the happily married couples say they engage in some but not all of their outside interests together. Moreover, there is reason to doubt the assertion of complete unity for the remaining couples. Benson (1955) finds that happy couples overstate their leisure-time companionship because they are so satisfied with their marriages. When checked on more precisely, they confess to interests engaged in separately without offending the partner. In short, they share *enough* common interests to give them a sense of basic mutuality that allows them to accept each other's separate activities without anxiety. Only when companionship is insufficient or personal insecurity excessive do separate activities cause conflict.

Individual talents brought to marriage need not atrophy just because the spouse does not share them. If the husband is a crack shot with a rifle but his wife is afraid of guns, he doesn't have to stay glumly home nor must she drag herself around the countryside in order to be loyal. If a musical wife is married to a monotone-ous husband, he doesn't have to attend her quartet rehearsals in order to prevent her from wasting her talents. Instead he can relax at home with his mystery story while she labors away elsewhere—each of them unguiltily enjoying his favorite sport—provided there are other things they do together.

*Individual Growth.* The question is not simply one of retaining individual talents brought into marriage. If husband and wife have a free relationship, they will not hesitate to cultivate new interests which emerge—even though the spouse may not join the effort. The challenge of marriage is to maintain communication and love between continually growing and changing human beings. Such a challenge is both more difficult and more rewarding than monolithic unity in marriage.

If husband and wife are to continue growing (the natural course of events), they will grow apart as well as together. In many areas their common experiences and mutual discussions will bring them closer together. But their distinctive roles in life stimulate divergent interests. The husband's professional growth may make his shoptalk unintelligible to his wife. And even in equalitarian marriages the wife is apt to develop more interest than the husband in child psychology. Besides, accidental factors may spur one partner into a new line of thinking. Couples who originally saw eye to eye politically may find one partner developing a sudden enthusiasm for candidates of the opposite party. The wife may catch the contagion of faith-healing while the husband's religious fervor cools. Such divergencies create problems in husband-wife under-

standing and empathy, but they also mean that personalities have not stagnated.

*A Domestic Bill of Rights.* In some ways the basic tenets of American democracy may be applied to marriage. In both the body politic and the body domestic there needs to be "in all essentials—unity; but in nonessentials—diversity." Couples must share basic values and key activities, but this does not prevent them from going their separate ways the rest of the time.

Perhaps marriage needs its own Bill of Rights to protect the civil liberties of each partner. Fundamental is the right to have one's own opinions. Conformity in ideas is as deadly to marriage as to society at large. Independent thinking about politics, religion, or any other controversial subject preserves the agility of the mind and provides mutual stimulation.

How about freedom of speech? Within marriage, it is essential to the problem-solving process. Unless each partner speaks his mind, decision-making breaks down. Yet diversity of opinion need not always be resolved. If freedom of opinion is to be real, there should be no compulsion to hammer out uniformity. Hence, free expression in marriage also means many a lively discussion of ideas with no goal in sight other than matching wits and seeking truth.

Should freedom of speech extend to public expression of diversity? Traditionally, no. Wives were supposed to keep their mouths shut unless they could echo their husbands' views. But if individuality is to exist in marriage, wives have as much right to speak as husbands. In informal situations this is increasingly welcomed. Husband and wife enter the circle of friends not so much as a pair as two individuals with minds of their own. The partner's ideas no more have to be accepted automatically than the next man's. But in formal situations where public issues are dealt with through parliamentary processes, husbands and wives arguing on opposite sides of the fence raise eyebrows and start tongues wagging. Only when partners are equally expert on the subject is marital division likely to be socially acceptable.

The most drastic form of freedom is freedom of action. This aspect of marriage needs more uniformity. Yet even here some freedom is desirable. Should not husbands and wives be able to vote their own convictions? True the net effect of divergent votes is to nullify each other, but is this reason to deny freedom of action? Probably not as long as secret ballots hide the discrepancy from public view.

Freedom in marriage—yes. But it takes unity too. Too much freedom ends in separation and divorce. Too much unity is smothering. Happy are those who find it possible to maintain a flexible bond between growing personalities. For them marriage is a liberating force and a creative achievement.



*Sex:*

*The Most Intimate  
Relationship*

The theme of this book is the achievement of intimacy in personal relationships between men and women. In sexual intercourse intimacy can be achieved most fully. Can be, but isn't necessarily. Physically, to be sure, intercourse always involves the greatest intimacy, the greatest revelation of the self, the maximum interaction of body with body. When intercourse unites partners in love, they give themselves unreservedly to each other. Because it is so convulsively physical an experience, it adds a vibrant dimension to their relationship.

But sex is not necessarily intimate psychologically. When mental blocks exist between husband and wife, when he forces himself upon her, when she begrudges being "used," physical intimacy is shorn of spiritual unity. Indeed, under such circumstances the incongruity between the physical and psychological relationships of husband and wife may widen the gap between them. The challenge of marriage is to integrate the sexual and nonsexual aspects of the relationship to produce a deepened sense of oneness, expressing in new terms the language of love. Then husband and wife experience most profoundly the communion of life with life. Then only does marriage become a fully personal relationship, relating the whole man and the whole woman. In this way marriage is unique, transcending the closest of friendships, more intimate than any other relationship in life.

## The Essence of Marriage

The way words are used is sometimes revealing. In the sexual area an impressive number of phrases equate marriage with sex. For example, intercourse is often called "married love." The "marriage bed" is not where couples sleep together but where they have intercourse. Even "sleeping together" is synonymous with intercourse. The "wedding night" refers to sexual initiation. Uninitiated sexually, a couple aren't even considered married. Intercourse is the "consummation" of marriage. Without it even the most conservative legal jurisdictions and religious communions say the process of getting married has not been completed, the so-called marriage can be annulled, and the partners are still free to enter a true marriage with someone else.

To some readers this may seem to overemphasize the place of sex in marriage. For all, however, it indicates how indispensable sex is. From the sociological point of view these word usages symbolize the importance society attaches to the sexual aspect of marriage. From the psychological point of view many a wife feels that when she makes herself available sexually, she is most truly being a wife:

I didn't know much about sex before I got married. I didn't think much about it because I was so much in love. I was a little scared, too. [Now?] It's just about like it was when we first got married. *Any time he wants me for a wife*, it's O.K. with me. That's the way it should be. If you want to have a happy family you have to feel that way about each other. It's important to both of us; it makes us feel closer to each other. We both enjoy it equally. (Rainwater, 1960: 105, italics added.)

### SEX AND THE REST OF MARRIAGE

Though sex may be the essence of marriage, this does not mean that success in marriage hinges on it alone, that if the sexual relationship is satisfactory, everything else will be too. Nor does it mean that other aspects of marriage are so unimportant that sex is unaffected by them. Rather, the evidence demonstrates a two-way cause-and-effect relationship between sex and the rest of marriage.

This can be seen most clearly when things go wrong. Trouble in either area tends to spread to the other. Sexual inadequacy leaves couples tense and grumpy, more apt to flare up when other frustrations arise. Conversely, nonsexual problems create barriers to sexual satisfaction. Wives with grievances against their husbands often refuse to have sexual relations. Where intercourse occurs despite marital tensions, the wife's ability to relax and respond in intercourse is impaired. Though the husband's physical responses are less affected, he cannot enjoy the experience as fully when he knows his wife is angry with him.

Because of this two-way process of influence, most couples tend to be either satisfied or dissatisfied with both the sexual and nonsexual aspects of their relationship. For example, there is a close correlation between the wife's sexual satisfaction and her feeling of love for her husband (Chesser, 1957: 446). Similarly, Terman (1938: 276 ff.) finds positive correlations between marital happiness and such aspects of sexual adjustment as frequency of intercourse, degree of physical "relief" from intercourse, and the wife's frequency of orgasm.

The crucial test of the symmetry of influence of the sexual and nonsexual aspects of marriage comes from exceptional cases where they are temporarily out of kilter. If at the beginning of marriage, sexual adjustment is high and marital adjustment is low, will marriage adjustment improve or sexual adjustment deteriorate? For husbands in Burgess and Wallin's study, the answer is fifty-fifty. Though initial discrepancies sometimes last as long as ten years after marriage, where consistency emerges, the sexual and nonsexual aspects of marriage are equally influential. This is true regardless of whether it is initially the sexual adjustment or the nonsexual that is poor (Dentler and Pineo, 1960).

*A Question of Values.* Generally speaking, a couple cannot have trouble in the sexual area without expecting it to affect the rest of marriage. How detrimental it is, however, depends on the importance the couple attach to sex. If sex is low in their hierarchy of values, difficulty is far less disappointing than for those who emphasize it more.

When wives are divided into those with high and low sex drive, marital satisfaction suffers most from sexual deprivation for those with strong sexual desires (Wallin, 1957). Values differ between the sexes as well as between individuals. Men generally value sex more than women do. Therefore, sexual gratification is more closely related to marital satisfaction for men than for women. Deprivation, after all, is relative, depending not so much on the amount of sexual experience as on the relationship between the actual and the desired experience.

For religious people, spiritual values take precedence over material ones—including sex. As a result, we would expect the marriages of religious men and women to be less disturbed by sexual difficulties. Wallin's research shows that this is precisely the case for both sexes, especially for women since their value systems generally place religion high and sex low.

To summarize, sex is an essential part of marriage and in many respects the crux of the husband-wife relationship. However, couples and individuals differ in the importance they attach to sex. The disastrousness of sexual difficulties and the beneficialness of sexual achievements vary correspondingly.

*Comparative Difficulty.* The uniqueness of the sexual aspect of marriage means it is less plannable than the rest of marriage. To be

sure, those who begin sexual relations before marriage have a head start on working out their sexual adjustment (Kanin and Howard, 1958). Nevertheless, the initial phase—whenever it comes—is more apt to involve discrepancies and dissatisfaction than any other aspect of the interpersonal relationship. At least, one study of parents of Michigan State University students shows fewer husbands and wives satisfied from the beginning with their sexual experiences than with any other aspect of marriage (Landis, 1947). That initial adjustment in this area should be so difficult reflects differences between the sexes in the “equipment” they bring to marriage.

## Differences Between Men and Women in Sexual Equipment

The idea that the sexes differ significantly in their sexual potential is not popular today. Overreacting from the Victorian exaggeration of the differences, modern literature tends to minimize them. The equalitarian modern mind resists the idea of differences between the sexes. The notion that sex means more to men than to women seems unfair to women. Whoever ascribes such differences to women must be prejudiced against them. Or if such differences really exist, they must be due to cultural lag. Surely, with the emancipation of women, they will catch up, becoming eventually just as sex conscious, as sex driven, as sex enjoying as men. Surely, differences can be blamed on the inhibiting effect of discriminatory treatment of girls by our society, not to fundamental differences in physique or temperament.

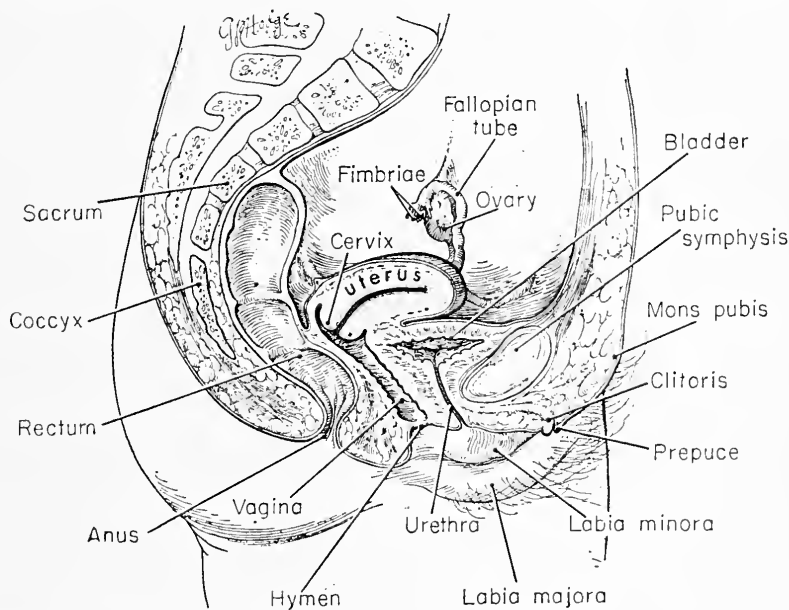
Chapter 5 took a different stance on this issue. It suggested that there are biological reasons for believing that sex drive is inherently stronger in males. In this chapter differences between the sexes in anatomy, physiology, and psychological processes must be spelled out in more detail because they affect so profoundly the cooperative sexual experience of the husband and wife. These are the ingredients the partners bring to the marriage bed, out of which they face the task of fashioning a mutually satisfactory sexual relationship.

### SEXUAL ANATOMY

Married couples don't have to know as much anatomy and physiology as a physician in order to achieve satisfaction. Nevertheless, some facts have practical implications for marital sexual behavior, and a basic scientific vocabulary aids discussion between the partners. In both sexes clusters of nerve endings sensitive to touch provide the major sensations of sexual experience.

*The Genital Area.* In men these nerves are centered chiefly in the penis, especially in the head or end of the penis. In sexual excitement, spongy blood vessels become so engorged with blood that the penis enlarges 25 per cent in diameter and 50 per cent in length (to an average of one and a half inches in diameter and six and a quarter inches in length—Dickinson, 1957: 196). The enlarged penis is labeled “erect” because it stands out stiffly from the body, enabling vaginal penetration. The stretching of the skin covering the head of the penis during erection increases its sensitivity to tactile stimulation.

Technically speaking, the female analogue of the penis is the clitoris (see Figure 18-1). The clitoris, much smaller than the penis, is only a



**Figure 18-1. Female Genital Organs in Cross Section**

quarter inch in diameter or roughly the size of a pea (Dickinson). Though a half inch or more in length (Greenblat, 1957), it is embedded in fleshy tissues so that many women are unaware of its existence. Since it is so small and inconspicuous, the clitoris provides the woman with less sexual stimulation. Nevertheless, like the penis, it stiffens when its spongy blood vessels expand under tactile stimulation. During erection the sensitivity of both penis and clitoris reach their peak. The throbbing sensations of sexual climax are focused in these organs. They are, therefore, crucial parts of human sexual anatomy from the subjective point of view.

The vagina has very few tactile nerve endings. Some of the tissues

surrounding the vaginal entrance are highly sensitive, especially the small inner lips (or "labia minora") and the vestibule of the vagina (Kinsey, 1953: 576-83). Since these surround the vaginal opening, they are stimulated by the rhythmic movements of the penis during intercourse and are a source of added pleasure to the wife.

If the hymen is large enough to prevent easy entrance of the erect penis, it interferes with the first intercourse, often tearing and bleeding in the process. This can be prevented by advance dilation or surgical cutting.

The vagina is elastic both in length and diameter and is equipped at the entrance with a sphincter muscle and engorgable spongy tissues, which enable it to adapt to the size of the penis. Even though individuals of both sexes differ considerably in the size of their genital organs, this vaginal adaptability means that anatomical compatibility is rarely, if ever, a problem. (Some medical authorities say there is no such thing as incompatibility in size, and the rest emphasize how rarely they have ever heard of such a situation. In either case, the average couple need not worry on this account.)

*Other Erogenous Zones.* In both sexes caressing almost any part of the body contributes to sexual arousal. However, certain special areas beside the penis and clitoris are well supplied with nerve endings that respond to touch. The mouth is so important that kissing is a natural part of foreplay. Though less distinctively a focus of nerve endings than the clitoris and vaginal entrance, the breasts experience similar vascular responses (that is, similar in-flow of blood). In sexual arousal the breasts enlarge appreciably and the nipples become erect and stiff (Masters, 1960).

For both men and women the basic physiological responses to sexual excitement involve vasocongestion. The sexes differ in the concentration of this response in the male penis versus its diffusion in the female between the breasts, the clitoris, and the outer third of the vagina (Masters).

#### SEXUAL PHYSIOLOGY

Differences in the extent and nature of sex drive in men and women create a greater imperiousness in the male need for sexual experience. The practical implications of this discrepancy will be dealt with later in this chapter. Closely related to these differences in sexual motivation are differences in ease of arousal, in the nature of climax, and in the amount of pleasure derived from intercourse.

*Ease of Arousal to Climax.* The climax of sexual experience in both men and women is orgasm. It is described by Kinsey (1953: 627) as follows:

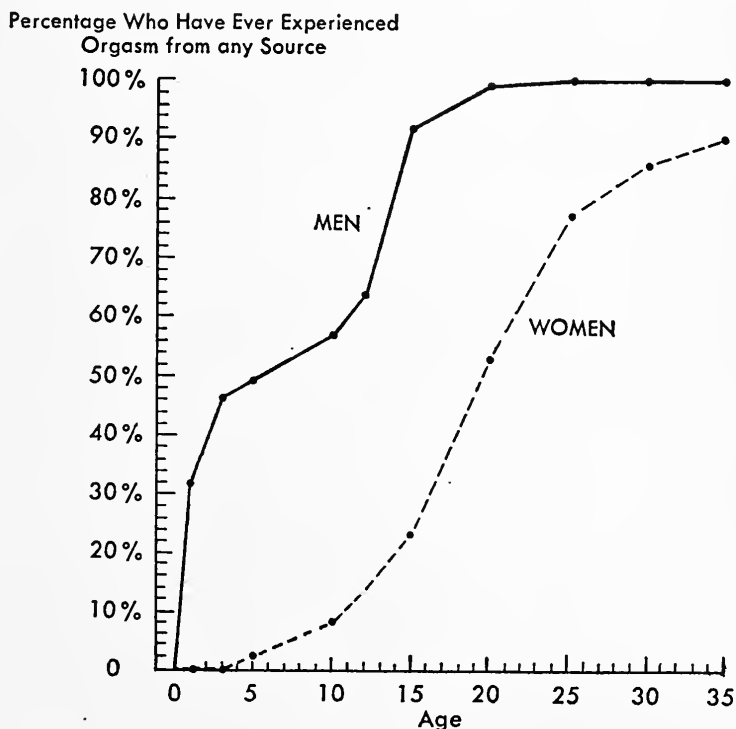
As the responding individual approaches the peak of sexual activity, he or she may suddenly become tense—momentarily maintain a high level of tension—rise to a new peak of maximum tension—and then abruptly and instantaneously release all tension and plunge into a series of muscular spasms or convulsions through which, in a matter of seconds or a minute or two, he or she returns to a normal or even subnormal physiologic state.

Orgasm is not a uniform experience; it differs appreciably among individuals in the degree of explosiveness involved. The more diffuse nature of the female orgasm leaves some women uncertain of its occurrence.

In postpubertal males, orgasm is normally accompanied by ejaculation, that is, by release of seminal fluid. However, prior to adolescence (and occasionally afterward), the male experiences orgasm without ejaculation.

The sexes differ considerably in the ease and frequency with which orgasm results from sexual stimulation. This is illustrated by the earlier age at which males experience their first sexual climax.

Figure 18-2 shows that American males on the average first experience



Adapted from Kinsey, 1948: 176, 184; 1953: 544.

**Figure 18-2. Accumulative Orgasm Experience for Men and Women, by Age**

orgasm ten to fifteen years before females. Orgasm is so common among preadolescent boys that the median male's first experience is at age six whereas the median female's is not until almost twenty. While differences in the social experiences of the sexes partially account for this age gap, anatomical and physiological differences are largely responsible. The physiological changes at puberty universally initiate males into sexual climax through involuntary nocturnal emissions ("wet dreams"). For women no comparable inevitability of orgasm ever occurs.

Once they are initiated to the point of climax, males soon find this a standard aspect of their sexual experience. For females orgasm is far less certain. Figure 18-2 shows that 10 per cent of American women never have an orgasm from any source. Kinsey reports that women achieve orgasm most easily in masturbation but far less regularly in intercourse. The undependability of orgasm for the human female is underscored by the evidence from comparative biology: "Positive indication of a sexual climax has not been detected in females of any infrahuman species" (Ford and Beach, 1951: 38). Apparently, female orgasm is a relatively recent development in the course of biological evolution and not yet firmly established in the human species.

**Table 18-1—Marital Orgasmic Responsiveness of Two Generations of American Women**

Percentage of Marital Intercourse with Orgasm	DECADE OF BIRTH	
	Before 1900	1920-29
None	33%	22%
1-29%	9	8
30-59%	10	12
60-89%	11	15
90-100%	37	43
Total	100%	100%
No. of cases	331	484

Adapted from Kinsey, 1953: 403.

Data for last six months of first year of marriage.

Thanks to improvements in sex education and in the marital relationships of men and women, there has been a continuing evolution of the orgasm experience of American women (see Table 18-1). While this trend reminds us that orgasmic response is not a purely biological phenomenon, it should not delude us into believing that the further emancipation of women will make them the equal of men in orgasm capacity. Though such notions are advocated by feminist females and sex-hungry males, scientific caution suggests that they exceed the facts.

Even under the most favorable circumstances (that is, among women reaching orgasm from the most propitious method of stimulation), there is an appreciable difference between the sexes in the length of time re-



**Table 18-2—Speed of Arousal to Orgasm in Males and Females**

Number of Minutes	Males	Females
Under 1 minute	31%	45%
1 to 2 minutes	21	
2 to 3 minutes	12	
3 to 5 minutes	18	24
5 to 10 minutes	12	19
Over 10 minutes	6	12
Total	100%	100%
Medion	1.9 minutes	4 minutes

Adapted from Kinsey, 1948: 178 and 1953: 626. Sources: Speed of orgasm in masturbation for pre-adolescent males and for females of all ages (including only those women eventually reaching orgasm).

quired to reach climax (see Table 18-2). Among individuals of the same sex, there is great variation in speed of arousal, but on the average orgasm from masturbation requires roughly twice as long for females as for males. No comparable data are available for intercourse. However, the lesser frequency of female orgasm in intercourse suggests that there is an even wider sex difference under those circumstances. As a result, a common adjustment task for husbands and wives is delaying the husband's response and hastening the wife's.

*Amount of Pleasure.* If and when the wife fails to experience orgasm, her physical pleasure is correspondingly reduced. She may still find satisfaction in being wanted and needed by her husband and in meeting his sexual needs. The sense of intimacy with her husband and of mutual love expressed through intercourse may be undiminished. She may also derive considerable pleasure from the physical stimulation of intercourse, both from the petting or foreplay and from the sensations of intercourse itself.

Nevertheless, physical pleasure is never as intense without climax as with it. How frustrating the lack of climax is depends partly on the wife's (and the husband's) expectations. If they recognize the unpredictability of feminine orgasm, they will be less disappointed. On the other hand, some disappointment is understandable. The choice for married couples, then, lies between sympathetic and antagonistic handling of their disappointment:

In all the years we've been married, Debby has never had an orgasm and this disturbs both of us greatly. She feels bitter about it and accuses me of using sex simply for self-gratification at an "animal" level. I feel frustrated too by my inability to produce an orgasm in her.

Wives can live happily over the years without orgasm, provided both partners accentuate the positive. If they concentrate not on what is missing but on what both partners gain from the experience, they can derive the maximum satisfaction possible from their limited circum-

stances. Especially when wives concentrate on what they can give their husbands, personal disappointment seems less important.

Sex, after all, is less important to most women anyway. Wives can "take it or leave it," whereas husbands prefer to take it. Attitudes vary, of course, and in particular cases the relative urgency of sex may be reversed. But that is unusual. Particularly in the lower strata of society, the distinction between the sexes is sharp. A British study summarizes the negative attitudes of working-class wives as follows:

There is a barely veiled sex antagonism, and the word "they" is commonly used as a generic term for the demanding males. With this is combined an attitude of submission. . . . Passive endurance is shown in such phrases as "he's happy," "I try to be accommodating," "it's a satisfaction for him."

This negative attitude quite often reaches a low point in one of boredom, even dislike, and a desire to get it over: "I'm not keen," "I don't really think there's anything in it," "sometimes it bores me," "I'm not really interested," "it's something that's got to be done, and the quicker the better," "my heart's not in it," "it's the one part of marriage I could do without." (Slater and Woodside, 1951: 167-68.)

To be sure, these are unusually negative evaluations, even for working-class women. Even in the working class, the same authors report that half the wives find "some" physical satisfaction and "to a lucky minority they were a source of real pleasure." As we ascend the social scale, improved marital interaction patterns and greater personal sensitivity produce increased sexual responsiveness in wives.

My sex training and education began when I was eight. Sex was always considered a wonderful part of marriage. When my parents spoke of sex there was never any embarrassment but always an educated and healthy approach. Before I was married I had no doubts about sex being anything but right and beautiful. My education had been so complete that there were never any fears or qualms—not even momentary. As a result, when I got married we had an excellent adjustment in sex very early.

The point, however, is not the precise proportion of wives to whom sex is meaningless nor even the causes thereof (which are not purely constitutional). The point is that *only* women have such attitudes. It is difficult to imagine men making the negative statements quoted above. Even in those rare marriages where the wife is more demanding than the husband, the man does not find sex an empty experience.

The fact that sex is so often unpleasant for wives obligates husbands to do all that they can to counteract this tendency. With skill and effort they can increase the wife's responsiveness and pleasure. Even so, the difference between the sexes in the regularity and meaningfulness of orgasm is so great and so closely tied to anatomical and physiological factors that it can hardly be eliminated even if it can be reduced.

In short, from the physiological as from the anatomical point of view, sex is a larger factor in the lives of men than of women.

## SEXUAL PSYCHOLOGY

Men are erotic—women are romantic. This generalization provides the key to much of the problem and the challenge in the sexual side of marriage.

*Sources of Sexual Arousal.* Psychological differences between the sexes are strikingly revealed in their sources of sexual stimulation. For men erotic sources are paramount, whereas for women arousal comes more from romantic sources.

**Table 18-3—Sources of Sexual Arousal for Males and Females**

Stimulus	PERCENTAGE EVER SEXUALLY AROUSED BY PARTICULAR STIMULUS	
	Male	Female
Fantasies about opposite sex	84%	69%
Portrayals of sexual activity	77	32
Observing opposite sex	72	58
Burlesque and floor shows	62	14
Reading books	59	60
Nude photographs	54	12
Hearing erotic stories	47	14
Watching commercial movies	34	48

Adapted from Kinsey, 1953: 651–71. Reciprocal percentages have never been aroused by the particular stimulus. All percentages are based on those actually exposed to the stimulus.

Table 18-3 shows that the sexes differ most in response to stimuli that are unambiguously erotic in nature. To be sure, some of the female diffidence to erotic stimuli reflects the fact that floor shows, and so forth, are largely designed for males in the audience. Nevertheless, equalization of the stimulus does not equalize the response. Masculine stimuli leave most women unaffected or even disgusted, whereas the more erotic the female stimulus, the more excited the male response.

The differences between the sexes in Table 18-3 diminish or are reversed precisely in those areas that are ambiguous enough to allow the sexes to respond to different features of the situation. Women respond most distinctively to commercial movies, followed by literature. We suspect that the sexes differ sharply in the kinds of books and movies they find sexually stimulating. For men the preferred types are Continental movies and sexy pocket books. For women, romantic movies and romantic novels. So even in categories where the sexes seem most alike, they still differ.

*Sex and Love.* These contrasting preferences reflect the fact that sex and love are closely linked for women but not for men. To most women sex apart from love is revolting. To most men sexual arousal apart from love occurs frequently.

The task of marriage is to link an erotic man with a romantic

woman in a satisfactory functioning relationship. This is neither easy nor "natural." Left to the free play of their impulses, men would be polygamous or at least promiscuous, leaving their wives romantically disillusioned.

However, the restraining influence of civilization enables men and women to rise above the animal level and meet each other's contrasting needs. The more civilized, the better educated, and the more mature the individuals involved, the greater their success in integrating sex and love. In his study of mentally healthy people, Maslow (1953: 66-67) finds that "sex and love can be and most often are very perfectly fused with each other in healthy people. . . . Self-actualizing men and women tend on the whole not to seek sex for its own sake, or to be satisfied with it alone when it comes."

To fuse sex and love requires of the husband and the wife contrasting efforts. The wife must try to give herself physically to her husband out of her love for him, to be willing to have sexual relations more often than her impulses would dictate. The husband's strategy must be to seduce his wife romantically rather than erotically, to put her in the right frame of mind by romantic words and settings that appeal to her and by veiling from her whatever erotic stimuli affect him. With such efforts husbands and wives can bridge their differences in sexual psychology and synthesize sex with love and the rest of marriage.

## Development of the Sexual Relationship

At least as much as any other aspect of marriage the sexual relationship is dynamic. The fact that it embraces both physical and social elements gives it dual sources of change.

### THE FIRST EXPERIENCE

Like a first parachute jump or first childbirth, the first experience of sexual intercourse is an adventure never to be repeated. Whether it comes after marriage or before, whether with the fiancée or a stranger, there are always curiosity and discovery involved. Since no art can be perfected without practice, initial doubts and anxieties are understandable. The more secure the relationship, the more easily qualms can be shared and inadequacies forgiven.

Generally speaking, early intercourse cannot be expected to function as well as more practiced occasions. This does not mean it is necessarily unpleasant—though it may be—but that it is less satisfactory than it will become with more experience.

The uncertainty of initial events can be reduced by advance educa-

tion and orientation. Slater and Woodside (p. 173) report that "Ignorance is remembered with regret, instruction with satisfaction. . . . Books on sex have helped, and create a mental background which favours attempts at a planned adaptation. . . ." The unhappiest experiences involve women who go into marriage naive, never having heard or read anything about the sexual side of marriage. Advance orientation may take the form of conversation between the partners or reading the same books.

When it comes to the occasion itself, the mutual love and consideration which benefit sexual relations under any circumstances are especially needed at the initiation:

My husband's thoughtfulness on the first night of marriage was the key that unlocked the door to our happy marriage. We were both tired and in need of rest. He suggested that I get ready for bed while he unloaded the car. I felt this was an excuse to spare me embarrassment and I appreciated his thoughtfulness. Once in bed we tried to go to sleep in each other's arms. But despite our weariness, we could not sleep. Finally, I said, "Honey, you want to have intercourse, don't you?" He answered, "Only if you really want it. I don't want to ever have it unless you want it too." The unselfishness of his statement, in the face of his strong desire, caused me to love him in a way I never dreamed I could love anyone.

Considerateness is appreciated in any situation, especially when embarking on the unknown and emotion-charged experience of sexual intercourse for the first time. In the 1920's, 21 per cent of the men and 35 per cent of the wives interviewed by Hamilton (1929: 372) reported feelings of reluctance, shyness, fear, or aversion when they first had intercourse with their spouse. The percentages may have dwindled with the intervening improvements in sex education, but underlying uncertainty in the face of a revealing new experience will always make the sexual initiation an occasion worthy of empathic co-operation.

Intercourse not only reveals the body visually or at least tactilely to the opposite sex—often for the first time in life outside the family—but also reveals the functioning person in a new light. Sexual skillfulness or clumsiness, responsiveness or coldness, tenderness or ruthlessness and self-centered preoccupation are now made manifest. For the man, especially, there are hazards of difficulty in achieving or maintaining an erection or in reaching a climax soon enough but not too soon—hazards encountered by 15 to 20 per cent of Hamilton's respondents on first attempting intercourse with the spouse. (If the setting is disgusting or shocking, such problems are even more widespread, affecting as many as half of all teenage first encounters with prostitutes—Kirkendall, 1960.)

In the context of love, and especially within the security of marriage, difficulties occur less often. More importantly, marital failures can be forgiven. The risk of well-intentioned clumsiness is the price paid by couples who choose to discover the meaning of sex together. Counter-

balancing this risk is the sense of mutuality derived from adventuring together.

Even the worst initial difficulties rarely ruin a continuing relationship—no matter how bad:

Such experiences usually, but not always, sink into the past without serious aftereffects ("we often laugh about it now"). They are in any case productive of misery and embarrassment at the time, and a disturbance of harmony that needs to be surmounted: "There were difficulties in the beginning, but affection carried us through" is true of many. (Slater and Woodside, p. 173.)

*The Wedding Night.* For virgin couples the wedding night is usually the occasion for initiation. Couples ordinarily expect to climax their wedding ceremony in this way. However, rules are made to be broken when they don't fit. In Hamilton's sample hardly more than half the virginal couples attempted intercourse on the wedding night, and less than half succeeded in achieving intromission (p. 370). All sorts of reasons caused postponements: menstruation, contraceptive inadequacy, and lack of opportunity, as well as fatigue and reluctance. In any case the first experience deserves auspicious circumstances. If circumstances aren't right the first night, they are worth waiting for.

*The Honeymoon.* For the initiated and the uninitiated alike the honeymoon is a time of sexual enjoyment. Even couples who have had intercourse before find the circumstances changed. At the very least, the honeymoon provides a degree of leisure seldom present before.

**Table 18-4—Wedding Night and Honeymoon Sexual Satisfaction of Virgin and Experienced Brides**

Evaluation of Intercourse	VIRGIN BRIDES		EXPERIENCED BRIDES	
	Wedding Night	Honeymoon Period	Wedding Night	Honeymoon Period
Very satisfying	18%	34%	33%	56%
Satisfying	29	42	39	36
Not satisfying	49	24	23	8
Very unsatisfactory	4	0	5	0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of cases	100	100	77	77

Adapted from Kanin and Howard, 1958. Source: Self-ratings for first marital experience and for first two weeks' experience by wives of married students at Purdue University.

With experimentation and practice, the inadequacies of the first marital experience are soon left behind. Table 18-4 shows that both virginal and experienced brides find the whole two weeks after the wedding far more satisfying sexually than the first marital attempt. The experienced wives have a head start, to be sure, but by the end of a fortnight, the virgin brides more than catch up to where the experienced ones were the week before. For both groups initial intercourse is rela-

tively unsatisfactory, but diligent couples soon learn how to make it more meaningful, both during the honeymoon and after.

### LEARNING THE ART OF SEX

Marriage manuals offer preliminary instruction in the skills of love-making. However, most of the necessary learning involves two factors not available in books: the self and the partner. Each individual must learn with his body as well as his mind the meaning of sex for himself—and must also learn what it means to his partner and how they can interact to best advantage.

*Stimulation.* Reading provides guidelines for exploring new facets of life, but the exploration itself must be done together. The questions involved are both physiological and psychological, not only what parts of the body are most sensitive to touch but also what parts the partner *wants* to have touched. Eventually, all the erogenous zones are likely to be explored, but at first the partner may not be ready for the most intimate genital contacts.

Stimulating the wife is the main problem (since the husband is usually too easily stimulated). Caressing many parts of the body—the legs, the back, the neck, the ears—may send shivers up and down the spine. As the husband experiments, the wife is the only one who can report the results. By her sighs of joy and her words of appreciation she can let him know what parts of her body are most thrilled by his touch. This “feedback” of her sensations speeds up his learning.

A second task is to learn what type of caress is most desired. Is it a firm and masterful stroke or a light and airy brushing? Perhaps a light touch is more suitable to some parts of the body than others. Or variation from moment to moment may be enjoyed. Again, the husband's ability to learn depends on the wife's cooperation in communicating her reactions to him.

While the husband's responsiveness is rarely a problem, he too has preferences about the manner and location of his wife's caresses. So the learning process is reciprocal.

Foreplay prior to intromission is an enjoyable part of sexual experience. Words of love and the tender caresses get the couple in a mood of anticipation and appreciation, relax the ring of muscles surrounding the vaginal entrance, and stimulate the necessary internal lubrication of the vagina.

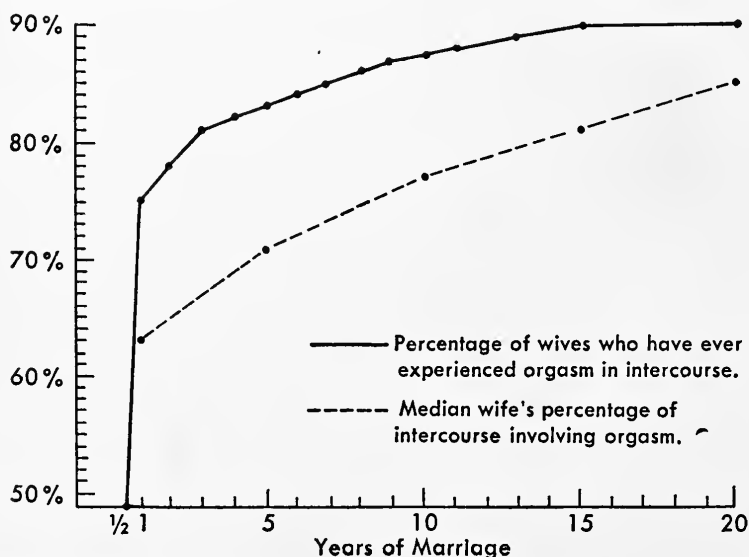
While preliminary arousal may occur in foreplay, the final climax seldom results from general petting. Kinsey (1953: 189) suggests that the intensive and uninterrupted physical stimulation of masturbation provides the best model. The clitoris and labia minora are the primary focus of stimulation in feminine masturbation and are correspondingly

important in intercourse. Stimulation may be initiated by the husband's manual manipulation if necessary. However, the greatest stimulation comes from his rhythmic bodily movement between the labia minora and against the clitoris after intromission. Stimulating the clitoris is possible in any face to face position provided the man lies far enough forward to bring the base of the penis in contact with it (Kelly, 1953: 35).

*Responsiveness.* For women, but hardly for men, responsiveness to stimulation has to be learned. Even the husband, however, may have to learn to respond to the specific experience of intercourse. The sensations of vaginal contact with the penis are different from masturbation, and it may take a while for the husband to respond most effectively to this new situation.

For the wife there is not merely the husband's transition from one stimulus to another. Characteristically, there is a whole process of learning responsiveness itself. To be sure, few brides today have never known any sexual feeling. As we have seen, the typical single girl experiences her first arousal to the point of orgasm by the time she reaches age twenty. Nevertheless, responsiveness at first is slow and erratic. Only with cumulative experience does it become more rapid and more nearly regular.

Supplementing the rapid increase in satisfaction with intercourse during the first two weeks of marriage (see Table 18-4), a continued but decelerating increase in sexual responsiveness occurs with experience (see Figure 18-3). Almost half the wives in Kinsey's sample experienced their



Adapted from Kinsey, 1953: 408.

**Figure 18-3. Orgasm Experience for Wives, by Length of Marriage**



first climax from intercourse within the first month of marriage, and three-fourths within the first year. From then on a few additional wives each year learn to respond, until a maximum of 90 per cent is reached in the fifteenth year of marriage. For the remaining 10 per cent, orgasm never occurs, no matter how long they are married.

With increased experience not only do more wives have their first orgasm, but also their orgasms are increasingly regular. The rising curve in Figure 18-3 marking the median wife's percentage of intercourse to orgasm implies the gradual increase in responsiveness the individual women can expect. In striking contrast to many indices of marriage that decline with the passing years, ability to respond sexually can be acquired only with experience and therefore improves with time.

Since the wife's sexual anatomy is diffuse, this learning process is subtle and complex. She must learn to relax, to let herself go, to abandon herself. She must become aware of new sensations. The requirements for responsiveness are diametrically opposed to the responsibility for control she bore before marriage. Little wonder, then, that the transition is not instantaneous.

Even though maximum responsiveness may be a long time coming, the intervening learning period need not be frustrating. It is, after all, a time of gradual progression from a low-keyed sex life to a higher pitch. Hence, there is a sense of accomplishment even in minor gains:

Although it was about two years after our marriage that I experienced my first climax from intercourse, I had felt perfectly satisfied prior to that time. Perhaps a person doesn't miss what he hasn't had. Anyway, being together and learning about each other was pleasant in itself.

The goal for both husband and wife should be to make their sexual experience as meaningful as possible. With mutual love and skillful stimulation from the husband, more frequent orgasms for the wife can be hoped for. Some wives who consistently fail to respond may be able to make the best of their bad situation. But for the average wife (and her husband too), frequency of orgasm is positively correlated with both sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction in general (Thomason, 1955: 158). This works both ways. Not only does orgasm produce satisfaction, but also other sexual and marital difficulties hinder responsiveness. When responsiveness improves, both partners become more satisfied with their sexual experience and their marriage generally.

*Control.* The converse problem for the husband is learning to control his sexual responsiveness to prevent premature ejaculation. Early in marriage husbands often find foreplay so stimulating that they ejaculate before intromission. Since erection rapidly subsides, intercourse cannot be completed. Even more widespread is ejaculation so soon after intromission that the wife is not stimulated sufficiently to reach her climax.

Control may be achieved through both physical and psychological measures. More frequent intercourse will reduce the physiological pressure for ejaculation by decreasing the amount of semen accumulated. Using a condom to sheathe the penis reduces stimulation. A topical anesthetic applied to the penis similarly reduces its sensitivity. By experimenting with the rhythm and depth of penetration, the husband can also learn what pattern of movements stimulates the wife without bringing himself to climax too soon. Coital positions may be discovered that stimulate the wife more and the husband less.

In addition masculine susceptibility to psychological stimulation makes it possible for husbands to control their reactions. Whereas concentrating on their own sensations and fantasies speeds their orgasm, by concentrating on the wife's reactions they can delay it. Mental focusing on stimulating the wife increases the husband's ability to sustain that stimulation. Then when she signals the approach of her own climax, he can readily achieve his.

The purpose of learning control is not to prolong intercourse indefinitely. Terman (1938: 297) finds only the slightest correlation between length of intercourse and either partner's happiness. Rather, the goal is primarily to enable both partners to reach a climax and secondarily to match their orgasms as closely as possible. Thomason (p. 160) finds that sexual and marital adjustment are appreciably higher for couples who usually reach climax together in contrast to those where one partner regularly gets there first. While ability to control the timing of orgasm is seldom so perfected that simultaneity can regularly be engineered, husbands self-controlled enough to come somewhere near simultaneity increase each partner's sense of togetherness.

When the wife's orgasm comes first, there is no control problem for the husband. In the converse situation loss of erection means that the husband may need to stimulate the wife manually if she is to achieve orgasm.

With the passing years couples can look forward to a decreasing discrepancy in their sexual capacities. As the wife's responsiveness increases with experience, the husband's decreases with age, so that intentional and fortuitous simultaneity occur increasingly often.

## Varieties of Sexual Experience

In recent decades the range of sexual experience in marriage has widened. The emancipation of women, the equalitarianization of marriage, and increased education for both sexes have encouraged experimentation with varied forms of intercourse. More and more couples

approach marriage with the attitude that they will try almost anything once. Having tried it, they may not like it, and may never repeat it. Nevertheless, experimental attitudes are increasingly common.

As a result of this willingness to experiment, manual-genital stimulation has become almost universal, especially for highly educated couples (Kinsey, 1953: 399). Oral-genital contact is tried by more couples but by no means all. Indeed, one study of Philadelphia divorces between 1937 and 1950 showed that wife-initiated divorce suits involving sexual complaints frequently blamed the husband's desire for unusual sex practices such as oral-genital contact (Kephart, 1954b). In short, while marriage manuals may encourage variety for variety's sake, respect for the partner's scruples is still fundamental.

Along with varied techniques of foreplay have come varied positions in intercourse. Most widely used to supplement the usual male-above position has been the female-above, followed by the side-by-side, rear entrance, sitting, and standing positions (Kinsey, 1953: 400). Entry from the rear is often used during the later stages of pregnancy. As with foreplay, unusual positions are often experimented with early in marriage but abandoned in favor of simpler or customary ones as time goes on.

#### VARIED CIRCUMSTANCES

Variety is not limited to the sex act itself. The biological and the psychological aspects of sex are too closely related for that. Variety is added as much by changing circumstances as by changing techniques.

Among the relevant circumstances is the nature of the relationship between husband and wife. The way they treat each other profoundly affects their sexual experience, especially the wife's:

Our sex life has improved a lot now that there is less tension between us. Since I've been helping out more around the house, Olive isn't so tired either so she's able to enjoy intercourse more.

Few wives are able to enjoy intercourse when their marriage is troubled. Love and sex must go together or else sex turns bitter. Reconciliation must occur before sexual responsiveness can become uninhibited again.

Freedom to enjoy sexual intercourse reflects the way the day's routine has gone as well as the state of the marriage:

I enjoy sexual relations the most when the day progresses favorably—if the children behave so my nerves don't get frayed. Similarly, George seems to be in a good mood after watching TV or after he's gotten a big job finished at the office.

Marriage is never quite so boring as some pessimists suppose. The same is true of marital intercourse. Even when confined to an arbitrary

schedule and a single position, intercourse still varies. Differences in mood color the whole experience. These moods are described in a classic passage by Levy and Munroe (1945: 129):

Sometimes the pair will be close and affectionate. Tenderness will pass into a rather solemn passion, a confirmation of their abiding love for each other. At other times their mood will be wholly frivolous. Intercourse then will be just a rattling good time without deeper implications. Or the husband will seek protection and cuddling at his wife's breast. Or he will lie like a girl while she takes possession of his body. At times he will vulgarize the act with smutty words or take a fine pleasure in hurting his wife and forcing her to his will. Or the couple may play at an illicit relationship, acting out a little seduction farce for their own benefit. They will try out odd positions and experiment with unusual parts of the body. Often, too, intercourse will be a routine satisfaction of a bodily need about as romantic as orange juice, toast, and coffee for breakfast. Our uninhibited married couples will take all of these variations and find them good.

The changing flavor of sexual experience reflects the changing marital setting. As partners go through life together, sharing parenthood, homemaking, and personality growth, sexual intercourse sensitively picks up the changing environment. The moon shining in the window one night and snow falling another create stage effects for the sexual drama. With changing moods and changing settings, intercourse never is completely routine.

Even if it were always the same, it wouldn't be boring. Like a swim in the lake on a hot summer day, the tension and release of sexual communion is one of the exhilarating experiences of life.

#### VARIATIONS IN FREQUENCY

Among couples there are enormous differences in frequency of intercourse, even for those in similar circumstances (age, length of marriage, number of children, and the like). For example, although young married couples typically have sexual relations two or three times a week, a quarter average once a week or less while another quarter average four to seven times a week (Kinsey, 1953: 351). Many biological and social factors cause this variation between couples.

*Actual versus Preferred Frequency.* Terman (1938: 275) finds a positive but very low correlation between frequency of intercourse and marital happiness. Either factor could as easily be cause as effect of the other.

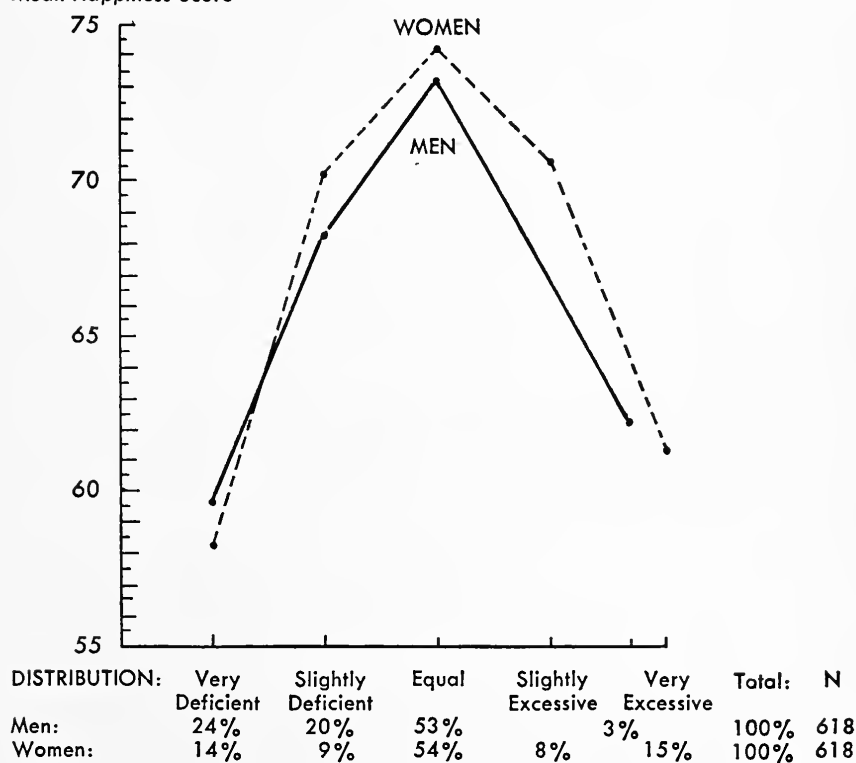
The low level of this relationship reflects the fact that for both men and women (though mostly for women) it is possible to have too much of a good thing. Happiness depends less on the absolute frequency of intercourse than on the relationship between actual and preferred

frequencies. Where extensive intercourse is what both partners want, happiness increases. But if experience exceeds either partner's preference, it becomes a source of irritation rather than of pleasure.

The percentages at the bottom of Figure 18-4 show that few husbands have sexual intercourse more often than they would like to, but almost a fourth of the wives do. Deficiencies are more common than excesses, since intercourse requires the cooperation of two partners and either one can deprive the other. However, because the male sex drive is usually stronger, more husbands than wives complain of too little intercourse.

Despite sex differences in preferences, discrepancies produce almost identical effects on men and women. Deficient wives are just as unhappy as deficient husbands, and surfeited husbands just as unhappy as surfeited wives. Not shown in Figure 18-4 but equally revealing is the fact that

Mean Happiness Score



Actual vs. Preferred Frequency of Intercourse

Adapted from Terman, 1938: 281, 283.

**Figure 18-4. Happiness of Husbands and Wives, by Relation of Actual to Preferred Frequency of Intercourse**

the partners of dissatisfied individuals are almost as unhappy as they are. Hence even when one partner gets his way over the other's reluctance, that reluctance appreciably reduces the eager one's satisfaction. Fortunate then are couples able to adjust frequency and preference to one another (either by changing their frequency or by adapting their preferences).

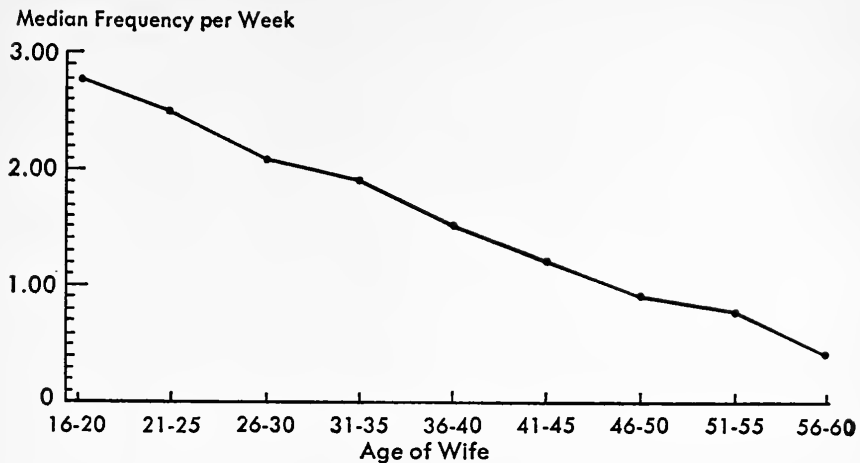
*Obstacles to Intercourse.* The fact that deficiencies are more common than excesses reflects not only the tendency for intercourse to be confined to the least common denominator of preferences but also the practical problems that are largely insoluble. Every month the wife's menstrual flow enforces a period of abstinence (more for esthetic than medical reasons, according to Greenblat, p. 47). In the last six weeks of pregnancy and the first six after childbirth, abstinence is ordered by most physicians to prevent infection. If the wife has a history of miscarriages, the ban may extend to the whole nine months of pregnancy. During such intervals couples may fall back on petting to climax or masturbation in response to the husband's sexual impulses.

Once children arrive, they interfere more with the timing than the frequency of intercourse. Couples who experimented with intercourse at odd hours of the morning or afternoon must check their impulses until children are asleep. When children are ill or upset, free time may never come. Moreover, children exhaust the wife with their strenuous activities and problems. Husbands too may be fatigued by their work, leaving weekends (especially Saturday nights) popular opportunities for the working class (Slater and Woodside, p. 166). Illness in either partner diminishes enthusiasm for activity of any kind, sexual or otherwise.

Sometimes, housing facilities are inadequate. The privacy necessary to free abandonment to sexual pleasure is destroyed by noise carried in either direction—into or out from the bedroom. Fear that children may hear (in the next room or worse yet in the same room), that in-laws may hear (for families living doubled-up), or that neighbors may hear (through flimsy apartment walls) prevent unrestrained movement. Intruding noises prevent the concentrated attention necessary for the wife to attain orgasm. Such housing problems reduce both the frequency and the enjoyment of intercourse.

*Aging.* Just as the energy necessary to sexual activity is impaired by fatigue and illness, it is sapped sooner or later by aging. The vitality of both men and women steadily declines, manifested as surely in reluctance to engage in sexual activity as in any other form of athletics. The result is an ebbing frequency for the average couple. (See Figure 18-5.)

Intercourse does not stop abruptly at age sixty—Kinsey just runs out of cases there. The chief cause of the decrease with age appears to be the husband's declining capacity to achieve the necessary erection and climax, rather than any change in the wife. We know that menopause does not reduce the wife's capacity for sexual enjoyment. Enjoyment may



Adapted from Kinsey, 1953: 394.

**Figure 18-5. Frequency of Intercourse, by Age of Wife**

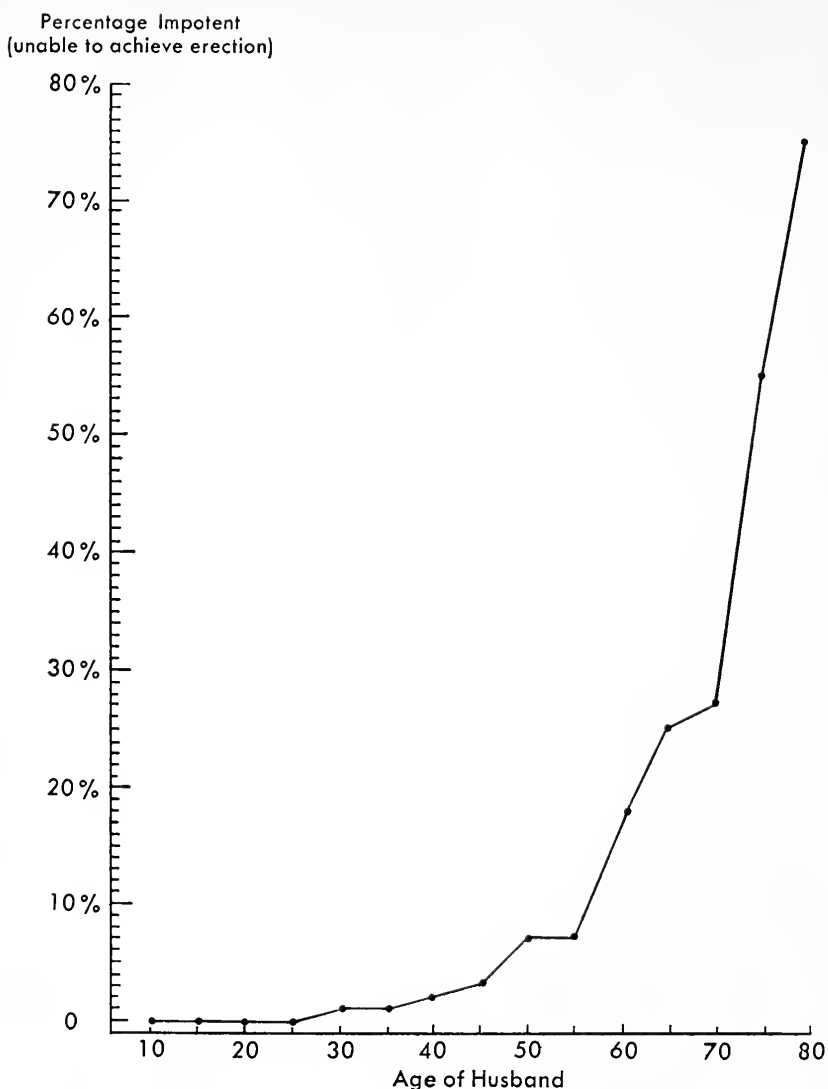
even increase for those who had worried about pregnancy. For men, however, impotence is an increasing problem, and more and more husbands become incapable of ever having intercourse, even at the longest intervals.

Figure 18-6 shows how rare impotence is before middle age and how common in old age. The few young men who are chronically impotent need medical treatment with hormones, psychotherapy, etc. Later in life the erotic impulse frequently declines in parallel with erectile ability, leaving senile impotence less a problem than it appears from the perspective of youth.

## Sexual Cooperation in Marriage

Couples whose sexual motivation is more or less equal have the fewest problems. Even for them, however, the partners' moods only occasionally coincide. When they've been to a party, movie, or a dance, both may be eager for intercourse. After an exhausting weekend with the kids or when the wife is bulgingly pregnant, neither may be interested.

But since moods are such individual affairs, a couple's ups and downs often differ. Sometimes the wife looks forward all afternoon to her husband's return and conveys her eagerness to him by her warm embrace. Or the husband was intrigued by a good-looking girl on the way home and is ready to go to bed extra early. When these moods fail to coincide, then what?



Source: Kinsey, 1948: 236. (Data for all males, married and single.)

**Figure 18-6. Impotence, by Age of Husband**

The first step is communication. Subtly or openly the interested partner expresses his interest, the reluctant partner his reluctance. From then on they have a decision to make. On some occasions the reluctant partner cooperates for the sake of the other. On others his reluctance is too great, and the eager partner abandons his insistence. In the long run equalitarian couples strike a balance between decisions won by each



spouse and between yeses and noes. Neither partner feels his wishes should always prevail.

The toughest problems face couples whose motivation consistently differs. For them initiative and response are troublesome questions.

#### INITIATIVE

Information is unfortunately unavailable on patterns of initiative in sexual relations in marriage. According to modern ideology wives are supposed to take the initiative as often as husbands. However, there are reasons for believing that they seldom do, even where their preferred frequencies are equivalent to the husband's.

(1) The sexual initiative before marriage is clearly held by the male. (2) Often the husband's preferred frequency is higher than the wife's. [The characteristic sexual complaint of husbands suing for divorce is that their wives have too little interest in sex relations, whereas plaintiff-wives conversely complain that their husbands have too much (Kephart, 1954b).] (3) The major difference between husbands and wives in unrealized role expectations is that many husbands are disappointed because their partners fail to initiate sexual activity half the time (Ort, 1950). Such bits of evidence suggest that husbands initiate intercourse far more often than wives.

There is at least one biological reason for this in addition to the difference in sex drive. While husbands, because of their stronger sex drive, are often interested in intercourse, they are not always so. Most men cannot achieve immediately consecutive ejaculations, and the older they get, the longer the interval required to recover their potency. For wives, by contrast, the ability to engage in intercourse is largely constant (even though the ability to reach orgasm varies). Given this combination of circumstances, intercourse depends on the husband's readiness for erection—especially in the later years of marriage. As a result husbands not only want intercourse more insistently but also want it when they are ready for it.

Since initiative comes primarily from the male, the wife must choose whether to agree or to refuse. The practical implications of this dilemma for the husband are that he should make acceptance as easy as possible for the wife and reward her for her cooperation.

Ease of acceptance may be symbolized by the contrast between rape and seduction. Husbands who force their wives to submit by insisting upon their "rights" or worse yet by economic or physical coercion may gain their sexual goal but only at the cost of alienating the wife. As every "wolf" knows, seduction is a fine art, the art of making a girl *want* to have sexual relations even though initially she wasn't interested. In marriage this means sensitivity to the wife's mood—choosing times when she

is fresh enough, relaxed enough, and happy enough to be agreeable. It means a person-centered, loving approach rather than a body-centered, erotic approach. It means respecting her right to decline if she so desires. If she accepts, the husband can make the remainder of the experience more rewarding by stimulating her to climax and by expressing appreciation for her willingness to respond to his need. If women are more romantic than men, then men have a responsibility to mobilize their romantic resources as much as possible.

#### RESPONSE TO INITIATIVE

The corresponding responsibility of women is to mobilize themselves to meet the husband's sexual needs. Under the significant title, *The Sexual Responsibility of Woman*, Maxine Davis expresses herself vigorously:

A woman should be willing to learn. She should not cooperate in anything that proves to be actually distasteful or unpleasant for her after she has attempted it for a time, for it would tarnish their love. But she should have an open mind and adventurous spirit and be willing to try anything that might make the relationship more flexible and gratifying to them both. . . .

A woman has a profound responsibility in maintaining an active marital relationship. . . . A wife sometimes finds that her husband's spontaneous desire for intercourse occurs more often than she is able actively to respond, no matter how much she would like to. . . . If she enjoys it most of the time she should certainly participate whenever he *needs* her. (1956: 186-88, italics added.)

The key word here is "needs." If the husband's sexual needs are stronger than the wife's, she ought to go out of her way to meet them as much as possible. To do so is to express her love for him (just as he in return ought to meet her feminine needs for affection, for dating companionship, and for religious fellowship). Where needs are not symmetrical, the more each partner goes out of his way to serve the other, the more meaningful and valuable their marriage can be. This is the opposite of the least-common-denominator level to which marital interaction so often sinks. It goes beyond compromising halfway between the husband's and wife's desires. The ideal is for the less interested partner to make the effort to meet the needs of the more interested one as far as possible. This is not to say that an ideal wife would never rebuff her husband's initiative. The facts of life are such that some selectivity is inevitable. However, she would try to accept her husband's overtures as often as possible.

In actual practice the typical wife rarely refuses her husband (even though refusal is characteristically a feminine role—the converse of masculine initiative). Generally speaking, only unhappy husbands and wives refuse intercourse very often (Terman, 1938: 290). For unhappy

**Table 18-5—Frequency of Refusing Intercourse, by Husbands and Wives**

<i>Frequency of Refusing Intercourse</i>	<i>Husbands</i>	<i>Wives</i>
Frequently or very frequently	1%	9%
Sometimes	2	27
Rarely	24	44
Never	73	20
Total	100%	100%
No. of cases	593	593

Adapted from Burgess and Wallin, 1953: 664. Source: As reported by spouse.

wives refusal not only expresses their sexual disinterest but also punishes the husband for nonsexual grievances as well. The very fact that sex means so much to the man gives an unscrupulous wife a potent weapon in her power to say "no" or to make her agreement contingent on some favor from him. When sex sinks to bargaining and contentiousness, the marital relationship is rapidly destroyed.

## Problems in Sexual Relationships

The problem of male impotence (rare before old age) has already been touched upon. Yet to be discussed is the more widespread problem of female frigidity and the problem for both husbands and wives of extramarital sexual involvements.

### FRIGIDITY

Whereas impotence is a categorical, all-or-none problem (the husband either is or is not able to effect intromission), frigidity is more diffuse and more variable in its definition. The loosest definition is inability to have an orgasm or to have one regularly. Such frigidity is commonplace at the beginning of marriage but decreases as wives learn sexual responsiveness.

A stricter definition is given by Levine and Gilman: "Frigidity is the complete lack of sex desire with a resulting inability to respond to stimulation and arousal. On this level, frigidity is relatively infrequent . . ." (1951). Sometimes complete frigidity means mere unresponsiveness. Sometimes it involves the actively negative response of vaginismus, an involuntary contraction of the vaginal muscles so tight that intromission cannot occur.

Severe frigidity prevents sexual intimacy in marriage and strains the whole relationship. Often the difficulty can be traced to negative childhood conditioning about sex:

Josie thinks sex is disgusting, though she spends her spare time reading love stories and movie magazines. In the ten years we've been married I've had to go without intercourse as long as three months at a time, when I think I'd prefer to have it every day. Her inhibitions are so strong that she feels sex should be gotten over with as soon as possible, without any talk. When she does relent, her attitude seems to be: "Let's pretend we didn't do it!"

Searching for the cause and cure of true frigidity is a medical responsibility. Sometimes physical factors are involved, but more often there are deep-seated mental blocks which hopefully may yield to psychotherapy. Even in such cases the husband can aid the patient's recovery by his loving concern and behavior. In lesser degrees of frigidity his role is even more crucial. If he accuses and blames her for unresponsiveness, he makes matters worse. But given patience and love and whatever professional help is necessary, most wives can hope to make at least limited progress. As Calderone (1960: 176) puts it, "There are hardly any truly frigid women. Down deep within the overwhelming majority is a sexual need and capacity for fulfillment that awaits only liberation."

#### ADULTERY

Because sex is the most intimate aspect of marriage, extramarital intercourse is its most profound betrayal. For this reason many churches and states that allow divorce on no other ground consider adultery sufficient.

The varieties of adultery are almost endless. Sometimes it is a kind of premarital intercourse for second marriages, that is, the physical expression of a new love which has already superseded the old. Sometimes it is a casual fling by a traveling man who considers himself a good husband. Always, however, it threatens the solidarity of marriage either socially by potential new involvements or psychologically by destroying the uniqueness of husband-wife intimacy.

Though marriage is always impaired—either as cause or effect of adultery—the relationship between adultery and divorce is not simple. Levy and Munroe, for example, are convinced that "sexual maladjustment, including infidelity, is seldom a primary cause of marital discord" (p. 86). Whether adultery causes divorce depends first of all on whether it is known—40 per cent of the unfaithful wives in Kinsey's sample believed their husbands didn't suspect them (1953: 434). Even where unfaithfulness is known, the partner does not always rush for his lawyer. In some cases he rushes to a marriage counselor, the crisis providing the impetus for reviewing and reconstructing a shaky marriage on a sounder footing.

Where divorce follows known adultery, the partner is apt to blame the unfaithfulness, especially if the offender was the wife. The double standard being what it is, infidelity is less forgivable in the wife than in

the husband. Thus 51 per cent of the wives' known affairs were given "major" blame for divorce versus only 27 per cent of the husbands' known transgressions (Kinsey, p. 445). Significantly, every single offended partner attached at least some divorce-causing significance in these adultery-plus-divorce cases.

In short, adultery tends to destroy marriage. The recuperative prospects for a given marriage are not always nil but depend on the circumstances and motives involved. Take, for example, Levy and Munroe's list (p. 92) of possible motives:

Infidelity may be an attack upon the wife, a refuge from her, an attempt to prove one's manliness, a revolt against childish taboos, a method of working out impulses arising from early experiences, an act of revenge either upon the other woman, the wife, or women in general, the gratification of a physical urge uninhibited by moral scruples—almost anything.

The consequences for marriage vary accordingly.

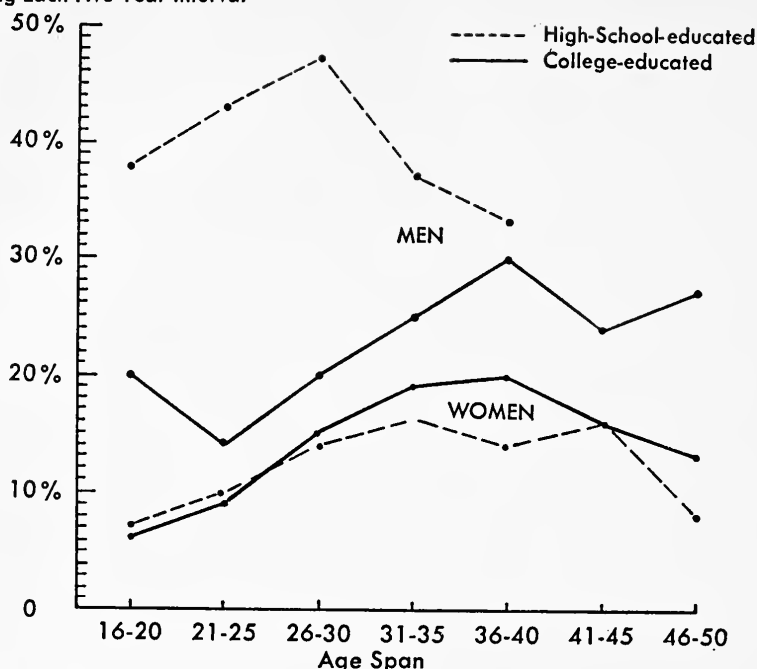
*The Incidence of Adultery.* If Kinsey's data are anywhere near representative of the American population (they are unquestionably the best available), adultery is very widespread. He estimates that 50 per cent of all married men and 25 per cent of married women commit adultery at least once (1948: 585; 1953: 417).

By and large the same kinds of people indulge in extramarital intercourse who indulge in premarital intercourse. Indeed, they are partly the *same* individuals, since premarital promiscuity predisposes people to extramarital involvement (cf. Chapter 5). The same people who have almost any kind of marital inadequacy (including the global failures of marital unhappiness and divorce) are more disposed to this form of trouble, too. Who are they? The irreligious. The low in status—educationally, occupationally, income-wise. The emotionally immature.

The evidence on social status is not entirely clear from Kinsey, although Figure 18-7 shows more infidelity for high-school-educated than college-educated men. Religious differences are striking—two to three times as many inactive as devoutly religious men and women are involved (1948: 481; 1953: 443). On emotional maturity Maslow reports (p. 70) that "self-actualizing" people are "relatively more monogamous than the average, and relatively less driven to love affairs outside the marriage." Generally speaking, then, the same factors that make for stability and success *in* marriage reduce the likelihood of involvements *outside* of marriage.

Figure 18-7 shows the usual differences between the sexes in sexual activity. Despite the fact that most extramarital partners are married too, more married men than women engage in such affairs. A small part of this difference is accounted for by women who make themselves professionally available. The bulk, however, is due to the relatively high degree of promiscuity of those married women involved in adultery at

Percentage Ever Experiencing  
Extramarital Intercourse  
during Each Five-Year Interval



Adapted from Kinsey, 1948: 348; 1953: 440.

**Figure 18-7. Experience in Extramarital Intercourse during Five-Year Age Spans for High-School-Educated and College-Educated Men and Women**

all. The majority of adulterous women have sexual relations with more than one partner, manifesting greater promiscuity than premaritally intimate women (Kinsey, 1953: 425).

Among married men there is a striking difference by education in the age when adultery occurs. College-educated men (and women of both educational levels) engage in adultery more often in the middle years of marriage when disenchantment and disengagement have set in. High-school-educated men (and even more those with only grade-school educations) do so early in marriage in a kind of gradual settling down from premarital promiscuousness. Presumably, lower status men are especially motivated by their biological impulses (higher in the earlier years) and less influenced by love for their brides. When love and sex fail to be integrated, the male animal is apt to prowl.

## *Part Three*

# FAMILY LIVING

The remainder of this book consists of an all too brief introduction to full-scale family living, that is, living with children.

Though some couples, by reason of conviction or by lack of concern, allow children to come when they will, most have preferences they seek to implement by the means made available by modern science (Chapter 19). The transition to parenthood involved in the nine months of pregnancy and the addition of the first child to the family brings the wife, at least, even sharper changes than getting married (Chapter 20).

Once a couple become parents, they assume new responsibilities for rearing their children, arbitrarily divided here into closely related chapters on the socialization and education of children. The book concludes with an analysis of life together as a family group.





# *Family Planning*

The desire for children is practically universal. The possibility of having them, unfortunately, is not quite so widespread. The greatest variability among families, however, comes in the number and spacing of children born to those able to have them. Values differ about the methods and circumstances governing family planning. Nevertheless, knowing the basic factors involved in conception and in variant patterns of child-bearing is useful for all couples, no matter what their values.

## Natural Child-Bearing

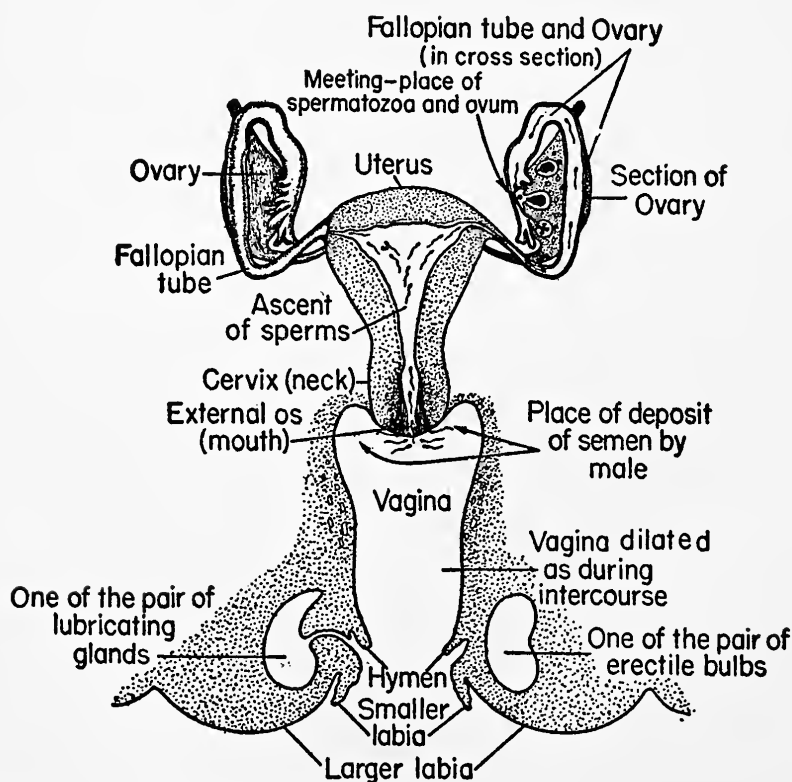
Before turning to family planning, it will be useful to review the essential facts about the processes involved in human conception and how often it would occur if no planning of any kind were undertaken.

### THE PHYSIOLOGY OF CONCEPTION

Conception occurs when sperm meets and fertilizes egg. This process depends on the operation of many factors—knowledge of which is as pertinent to those eager to achieve conception as to those who wish to prevent it. .

**Egg Production.** Eggs are produced in the ovaries under the influence of hormones secreted by the anterior pituitary gland. Approximately halfway through the menstrual cycle, an egg breaks through the wall of one of the ovaries into the body cavity. At the same time, the spot that the egg left (the follicle) enlarges into a "corpus luteum" which secretes a hormone (progesterone). Under the influence of progesterone the walls of the uterus become spongy and fill with blood in preparation for the fertilized egg. If fertilization does not occur, the corpus luteum gradually dwindles, and the lining of the uterus is cast off in menstruation.

Meanwhile, the egg is attracted to the entrance of the adjacent fallopian tube, or oviduct. The egg is carried slowly down the four-inch tube—the entire journey from ovary to uterus requiring about a week. Fertilization normally occurs in the tube. Some eggs are not capable of fertilization due to deficiencies of one sort or another. According to research studies, approximately 20 per cent of the eggs of normally fertile women are deficient in this sense, though the range varies from

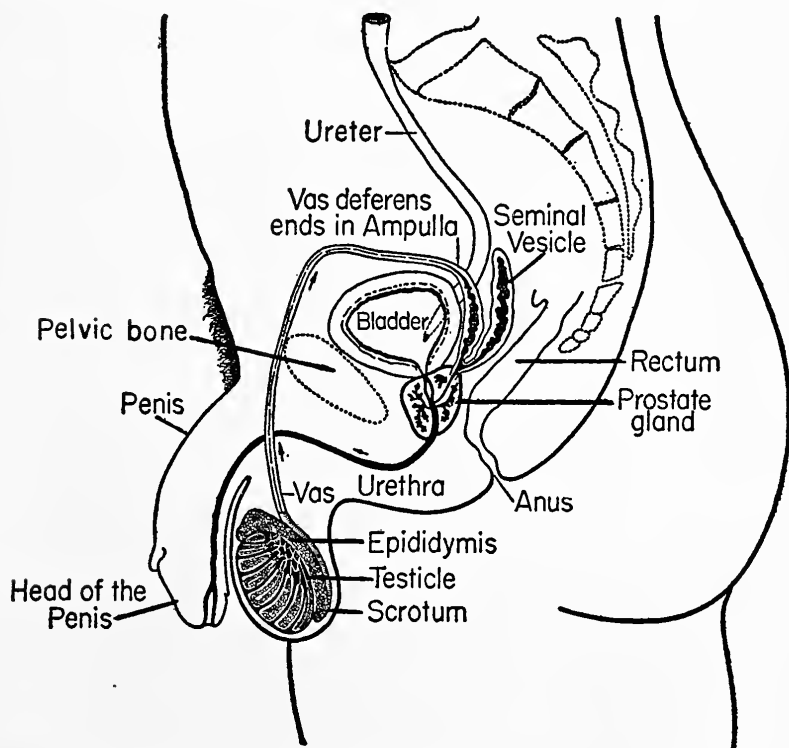


**Figure 19-1. Female Reproductive Organs**

practically zero in highly fertile women to more than 50 per cent in women of low fertility (Farris, 1950: 191).

**Sperm Production.** Whereas only one egg normally comes to maturity per month, several billion sperm are produced during the same period in a healthy, fertile man. Eggs are large enough to be barely visible, but individual sperm are microscopic in size. Each sperm has a small head containing the nucleus of the cell and a long, whiplash tail.

Sperm are produced in the testicles (or testes)—two glands in the scrotum which correspond to the female ovaries. As sperm are formed, they empty from each testis into its adjacent epididymis where they accumulate until ejaculation. During ejaculation sperm from both the epididymes pass through the vas deferens, or seminal ducts (which correspond to the oviducts). Near the base of the bladder each duct enlarges into a seminal vesicle which adds a secretion known as “seminal fluid.” Most of the bulk of the semen released during ejaculation consists of fluid contributed by the seminal vesicles and the prostate gland. These contributions are indispensable to the vitality of sperm and provide them with a suitable liquid environment.



**Figure 19-2. Male Reproductive Organs**

The two seminal ducts pass through the prostate gland into the urethra at a point just below the bladder. (Though the urethra serves alternately as the passage for urine and semen, it cannot do so simultaneously since the bladder outlet involuntarily closes during sexual arousal.) At the same time the numerous tiny blood vessels of the penis become filled with blood, so that the erect, stiffened penis is capable of penetrating the vagina. Impelled by muscular contractions, at the climax about a teaspoonful of semen is ejaculated, normally including several hundred million sperm.

*Fertilization.* Semen is deposited at the upper end of the vagina near the entrance to the uterus. Provided the sperm are not paralyzed by too great acidity (in the vaginal secretions of some women) or prevented by contraceptives, they begin moving into the uterus at a rate of one inch in eight minutes. Because the vagina is normally mildly acid, while the semen and cervical secretions are both normally alkaline, the cervix provides a more suitable chemical environment for the sperm. The sperm swim about randomly inside the uterus, some of them entering the tubes where fertilization may occur if a normal egg is present.

Within a day or two after ovulation an unfertilized egg loses its vitality. The life span of spermatozoa is believed to be equally short. The possibility of conception thus depends on the coincidence of a variety of factors: a normal egg; a sufficient number of vigorous spermatozoa; the time of intercourse in relation to ovulation; and no mechanical barrier preventing communication.

Though careful planning may reduce the interval, the average wife conceives about the fifth month of intercourse when no birth control methods are used (Westoff, 1961: 110).

After childbirth there is usually a medically advised delay in resuming intercourse and also a brief delay in the resumption of fertility. As a result, Freedman (1959: 240) estimates the normal interval between birth of one child and conception of the next at eight months. Added to the nine months' duration of pregnancy, this means the average mother would have a child every seventeen months. Roughly every eighth conception ends in a miscarriage, reducing the total number of children who would theoretically be born to nine per family. The much lower number actually born to American women reflects primarily the practice of birth control and secondarily the difficulties in conceiving that afflict a few married couples.

## The Ethics of Planning

No aspect of family life is more controversial than family planning. In recent years the controversy has sharpened as Protestant and Catholic churches have clarified their stands on the issues involved.

## PROTESTANT POLICY

Spurred by growing concern over the world-wide population explosion as well as concern for family welfare, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States issued a policy statement on "Responsible Parenthood" in 1961:

Most of the Protestant churches hold contraception and periodic continence to be morally right when the motives are right. They believe that couples are free to use the gifts of science for conscientious family limitation, provided the means are mutually acceptable, non-injurious to health, and appropriate to the degree of effectiveness required in the specific situation. Periodic continence (the rhythm method) is suitable for some couples, but is not inherently superior from a moral point of view. The general Protestant conviction is that motives, rather than methods, form the primary moral issue. . . .

## CATHOLIC POLICY

The Catholic Church agrees with the Protestant emphasis on the importance of motives but disagrees on the unimportance of methods. From its standpoint the only legitimate method of family limitation is abstinence from sexual intercourse. Any mechanical, chemical, or physiological interference with the potential union of sperm and ovum, or any form of sexual activity such as masturbation or withdrawal (coitus interruptus) that deposits semen outside the vagina is prohibited as artificial and contrary to nature. In an Encyclical issued in 1930, Pope Pius XI stated that:

. . . no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose, sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious. . . . Any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in it are branded with guilt of grave sin.

The Catholic and Protestant churches agree on the ethics of planning the number and spacing of children. They disagree flatly, however, on the legitimacy of using methods other than abstention from intercourse for this purpose.

## Methods of Family Planning

The major ways of influencing the likelihood of conception are rhythm, condom, douche, diaphragm, gels, and "the pill." Rhythm may be

used either positively or negatively, that is, to promote or discourage conception. The remaining methods are exclusively negative in effect.

### RHYTHM

The term "rhythm" normally refers to periodic abstinence from intercourse in order to reduce the likelihood of conception. In reverse, it may be used to increase the likelihood of conception by scheduling intercourse when the wife is fertile. In both cases the crucial problem is to discover when ovulation occurs.


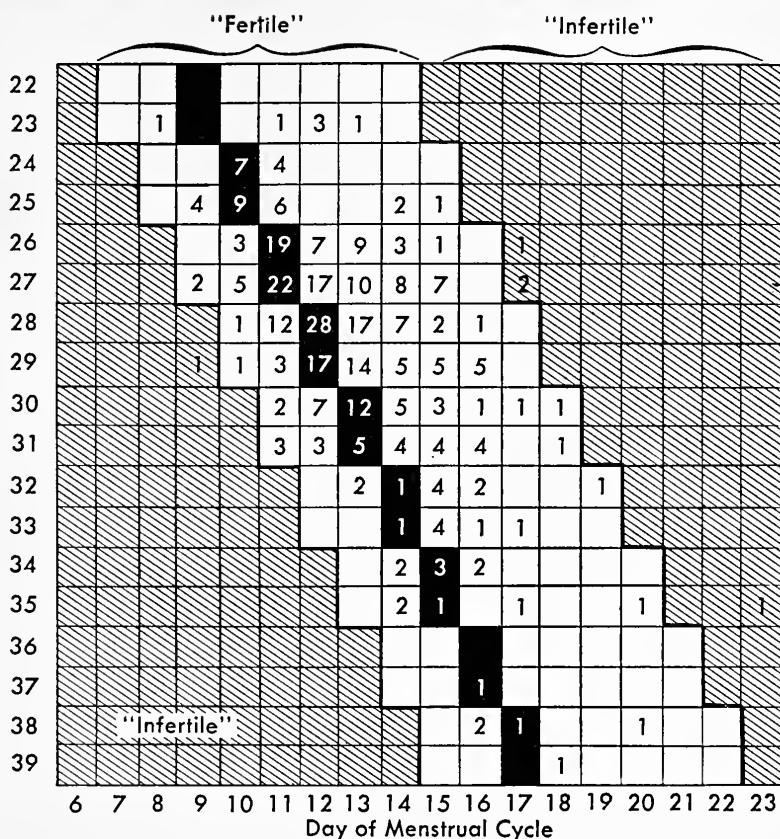
Farris (1956) finds that fluctuations in the woman's bodily temperature are an unreliable indication of ovulation. However, the "rat test" (in which urine from the woman is injected into young female rats, producing an ovarian reaction if the woman is ovulating) makes it possible to determine ovulation more accurately. From this information Farris derives the following formula: ovulation is most likely to occur on the second day prior to the midpoint of the menstrual cycle. Using this formula as a guide to experimentation with artificial insemination and with once-a-month coitus, Farris charted the dates when conceptions occurred in several hundred couples.

Figure 19-3 shows the point in the menstrual cycle when semen was implanted in the wife resulting in successful conception. It can be seen that conceptions tend to cluster around the date of ovulation predicted from the formula. However, due to variability in the length of the menstrual cycle as well as in the viability of sperm and ovum, conceptions were dispersed over several days in the "fertile" interval.

Farris' research involved the positive use of rhythm to facilitate conception. When it is used for family limitation purposes, Figure 19-3 suggests that unintended conceptions will be minimized if couples abstain from sexual relations for an eight day period surrounding the midpoint of the particular woman's average menstrual cycle. The more irregular the cycle, however, the less reliable the method.

*The Complexities of Rhythm.* Even for women blessed with regular cycles, rhythm places heavy demands on the self-discipline and mental ability of those employing it. Sexual abstinence requires self-discipline especially of the husband. When the eight-day fertile period is combined with the period of menstruation, intercourse is prohibited up to a dozen days a month. Were sexual desire and favorable circumstances easily relegated to the remaining days, the problem would be less complex. The variables affecting the husband's desire and the wife's readiness for intercourse cannot be expected to interact so considerably.

For the wife, rhythm is a complex technical problem. For college-educated women the mental requirements can be met. For the population at large, however, ". . . the complexity of the calculations involved and

Average length of  
Menstrual Cycle
 Predicted date of ovulation


Adapted from Farris, 1956: 103.

**Figure 19-3. Date of Conception by Length of Menstrual Cycle**

the uncertainties about exactly how they are made make it difficult for most people to entertain rhythm seriously" (Rainwater, 1960: 160).

### CONDOM

The condom is a sheath made of rubber or animal membrane which fits over the penis during intercourse, retaining the ejaculated sperm. Provided condoms are properly manufactured (they should be tested by inflating before use), this method is reliable.

A condom decreases the husband's pleasurable sensations during intercourse and can be applied only to the erect penis, thereby disrupting the spontaneity of foreplay. For husbands who wish to delay their climax

to coincide with the wife's, dulled sensitivity is an asset rather than a liability.

Rainwater's respondents point out that the condom requires the husband to assume the contraceptive responsibility (p. 151). For wives with an aversion to sex, to handling their own genitals, and to contact with the husband's penis and semen, the condom seems attractive. Moreover, its visibility as an external device means fewer fears about whether it is properly in place (in contrast to the diaphragm). Psychologically, however, it seems to those who use it the most "unnatural" of mechanical methods, impairing the sense of intimacy in sexual union. As one of Rainwater's male respondents put it, it's "like going swimming with your clothes on" (p. 128).

Even for the wife, Chesser (1957: 467) finds that "male methods" interfere with the enjoyment of intercourse more than "female methods." Hence, to minimize interference with their sexual relationship, most couples find the diaphragm, gels, or pill preferable to the condom.

#### DOUCHE

Douching involves washing sperm out of the vagina immediately after intercourse with a mildly acid solution designed to kill any remaining sperm. Psychologically, the necessity of getting out of bed immediately after the husband's ejaculation is unfortunate. Physically, the method provides no guarantee against sperm entering the cervix where they are beyond reach of the douche. Its chief attraction is for wives with negative reactions to sexuality who feel "cleaner" after they have washed themselves out (Rainwater, p. 162). Because of its unreliability, it is not medically recommended and is used chiefly by poorly educated women.

#### DIAPHRAGM

Unlike the highly sensitive penis, the vagina contains few nerve endings. Hence, use of a rubber diaphragm by the wife interferes less with the enjoyment of intercourse. Moreover, the diaphragm may be applied before going to bed so that it doesn't interrupt the sex act itself. The diaphragm is a flexible rubber dome roughly two inches in diameter (the exact size determined through fitting by a physician). It is coated with spermicidal jelly for added protection and inserted along the upper wall of the vagina to cover the cervix. It should be left in place eight hours and therefore does not disrupt the relaxation following intercourse. This method is especially often recommended by non-Catholic physicians as reliable and acceptable.

*The Invisibility of the Diaphragm.* The fact that the diaphragm is



worn internally is both asset and liability. The asset lies in reduced interference with husband-wife intimacy. The liability is that the wife must learn how to insert it properly, and both partners may doubt her proficiency. Moreover, for wives with negative attitudes to sexuality, the idea of any vaginal insertion is disgusting (Rainwater, p. 155). These reasons seldom discourage middle-class women but deter many working-class wives.

#### GELS

In recent years vaginal jellies have been devised and widely accepted for use without the diaphragm. Laboratory and field tests indicate marked improvement in the spermicidal effectiveness of some of the newer brands. For women with anatomical or practical difficulties in using the diaphragm properly, these jellies and creams offer substantial protection. The maximum safety, however, still appears to lie in using spermicidal chemicals and mechanical barriers jointly.

#### “THE PILL”

In 1960 the Food and Drug Administration approved the sale of a contraceptive pill on a prescription basis. The function of the female pill is to prevent ovulation. One must be taken regularly each day throughout most of the menstrual cycle. As a result, a considerable burden is placed on the wife's memory (and the family's pocketbook). Taken in smaller doses, these pills help to regularize the menstrual cycle for irregular women and thereby aid the rhythm method.

Continuing research is attempting to devise pills that are cheaper to manufacture and more lasting in effect. In July 1961, *Coronet* reported a pill for men that promised to be cheaper but still required daily dosage. Its function is to halt the production of viable sperm.

With new scientific and technological developments occurring frequently, printed information rapidly becomes obsolete. Since these are medical matters, couples desiring the latest information and advice must consult their doctor or Planned Parenthood Clinic.

## Contraception in Practice

The preceding section describes the major family-limitation methods available and also reports some of the major attractions and liabilities associated with their use. How widely are these methods used and how effectively do they prevent conception?

## THE USE OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

Family planning of some sort—with rhythm or some other method—is almost universal in the United States. The methods chosen and the schedule of use depend on such factors as ability to have children, number already born, and the religious values and educational training of the couple.

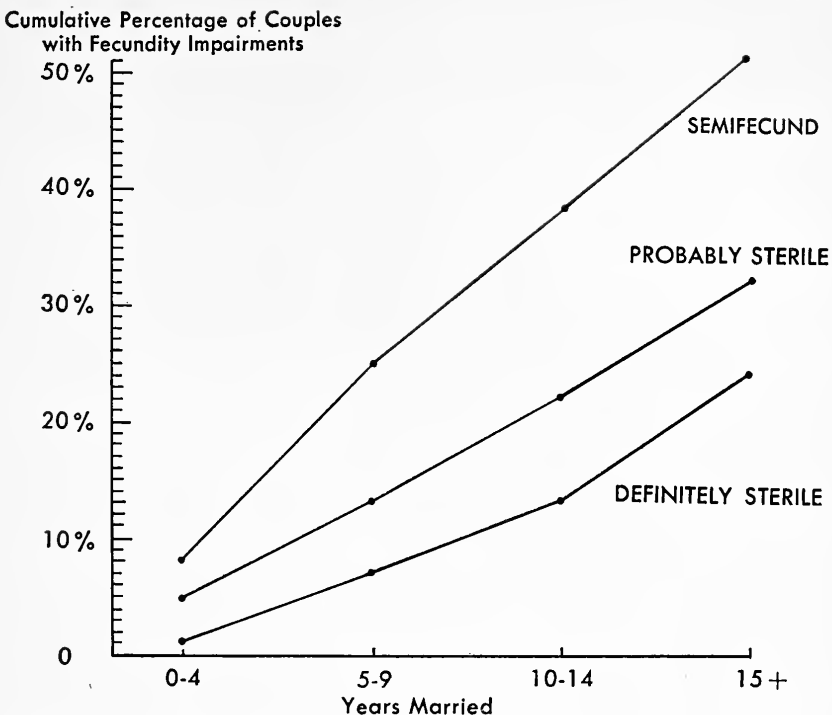
*Ability to Conceive.* For some families the problem is not how to prevent conception but how to encourage it. In Freedman's national sample of white women aged eighteen to thirty-nine, one-tenth of all married couples were definitely sterile (1959: 26). Almost a fourth more experienced partial difficulty in having children. As a result, for the child-bearing ages as a whole, one-third of all couples encounter physical obstacles to child-bearing (either involuntarily or voluntarily through sterilization).

Such information is misleading, however, since it fails to reflect the gradual incidence (or discovery) of fecundity impairments. When couples first marry, they seldom know for sure their chances of having children. Only after they have tried and failed do obstacles become apparent. Moreover, as time passes, more and more couples have illnesses or operations that interfere with their ability to have children. The net result is that the proportion of couples who are known to be completely or partially sterile rises steadily as time goes by.

Figure 19-4 shows that by the time women under age forty have been married fifteen years or more, the proportion definitely sterile rises to 24 per cent. An additional 8 per cent are probably sterile, and another 19 per cent have had enough difficulty conceiving to be labeled semi-fecund. The combined total of all three degrees of subfecundity reaches 51 per cent. Since most couples complete their child-bearing in the first decade of marriage, some of this inability to have children comes after the desired family size has been completed. On the other hand, enough of it interferes with child-bearing aspirations to lead couples to discontinue contraception as they discover they have little or no need for it. Conversely, contraception is used most widely and most diligently by those whose ability to bear children has been proven in practice.

*Limiting Family Size.* American families use contraception more to control the number than the timing of children. Especially with respect to the first child, many let nature take its course. Either because they are unsure of their ability to have children or eager to have one as soon as possible, they postpone contraception until after the first child is born.

As of 1960 Whelpton reports that four-fifths of all American wives in the child-bearing ages had used some method of contraception. Freedman's 1959 study (p. 65) showed that only half the population attempt to delay the birth of their first child. Most of the remainder begin using



Adapted from Freedman, 1959: 42.

**Figure 19-4. Cumulative Fecundity Impairments, by Length of Marriage**

birth control after that, but a few wait until they reach their desired family size. Almost 100 per cent of the fecund couples take precautions by the time they complete their preferred family size.

*Religious Values and Contraceptive Methods.* Catholics and non-Catholics differ less in the extent to which they practice family limitation than in the methods used. To be sure, Catholics usually want larger families. Hence they do not practice family limitation quite as often. Nevertheless, since rhythm is an approved method, most Catholics use it at least to space their children, and this inevitably reduces their total below the biological potential of nine.

Table 19-1 shows that Catholic couples use rhythm more and other methods less than non-Catholics. However, more than one-third of the Catholics had already used methods other than rhythm by the time they were interviewed and still more were likely to do so prior to menopause. Some Catholic couples rely on rhythm at the beginning of marriage but switch to other methods as they acquire more children (Freedman, p. 189).

**Table 19-1—Actual or Expected Use of Rhythm and Other Methods of Contraception, by Religion of Husband and Wife**

Religion	ACTUAL OR EXPECTED USE	Percentage Using Contraception		
		ACTUAL USE TO DATE		
		Total	Rhythm Only	Other Methods
Both Jewish	89%	89%	2%	87%
Both Protestant	90	86	6	80
Wife Protestant, husband Catholic	89	81	11	70
Husband Protestant, wife Catholic	81	73	27	46
Both Catholic	77	70	35	35

Adapted from Freedman, 1959: 105, 185.

Table 19-1 shows that mixed marriages tend to compromise on contraception. Since wives generally take religion more seriously and are more role-involved with child-bearing and child-rearing, the choice of contraceptive methods is affected more by the wife's religion than the husband's.

In unmixed Catholic marriages adherence to the norm of the Church coincides with the frequency of the wife's church attendance. For those who regularly attend services, rhythm is commoner than disapproved methods. However, for nominally Catholic wives who seldom or never attend Mass, the hold of the Church over contraceptive practice is correspondingly limited (Freedman, p. 184). Within the Catholic group the greater the wife's education, the greater the tendency to use rhythm (p. 201). Wives who failed to complete high school are unlikely to understand the complexities of rhythm.

*Educational Training and Contraceptive Methods.* The value of education (or at least intelligence) in mastering the more complex methods of contraception has been mentioned several times. Those who drop out of school lack either the mental ability or the self-discipline necessary to postpone immediate sexual and/or financial gratifications for the sake of long-run gains. Weakness in either brainpower or willpower is disastrous to complicated methods or indeed to the use of any method at all.

Table 19-2 shows that education is highly correlated with the use of contraception. Indeed, the greater the education, the wider the variety of methods employed at one time or another. Education is most closely linked with using the diaphragm. Secondarily, rhythm (as with Catholics) and the condom increase in popularity with education. On the other hand, the relatively ineffective methods of douching and withdrawal are tried less by college-educated wives than by those with less education.

Generally speaking, highly educated couples are more apt to control their family size and to choose those methods that (as we shall see) are the most effective.

**Table 19-2—Contraceptive Methods Ever Used by Young Protestant Wives, by Education of Wife**

Method Ever Used	Education of Wife			
	Grade School	1-3 Years	4 Years	College
None	47%	30%	20%	10%
Rhythm	12	17	22	29
Withdrawal	11	15	13	11
Douche	20	24	26	24
Condom	23	32	38	46
Diaphragm	9	26	34	51
Total	122%	144%	153%	171%

Adapted from Freedman, 1959: 200, 204. Totals add to more than 100% because some couples use more than one method at different times or simultaneously.

### THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

The various methods differ appreciably in their ability to prevent conception. However, the greatest source of unintended pregnancies is disuse or misuse of the methods. Since few couples manage to use their preferred methods consistently, human factors are generally more important than technical factors in contraceptive failure.

*The Human Factor in Contraceptive Usage.* Rainwater (p. 122 ff.) finds that willingness to practice contraception at all, as well as to practice it consistently, is closely correlated with sexual attitudes. Couples who are neither afraid of sex nor disgusted with it but treat it matter of factly and discuss it openly are more likely to use contraception consistently.

Babchuk and LaCognata (1960) find similarly that unwanted pregnancies happen most to those Planned Parenthood Clinic patients with sexual problems or with multiple marital problems, whereas those with few or no problems in getting along with their husbands use the same methods more successfully. The ability to practice contraception undeviatingly depends on having a stable personality and a stable marriage.

Couples who usually practice birth control faithfully may decide occasionally to take a chance when they run out of contraceptive materials or don't want to be bothered. Especially after there has been too much drinking, normal controls against indiscretions are weakened. Though most couples "get away" with it the first time, for every group of couples or for every series of chance-taking by the same couple, the probabilities of conception are predictable. Hence, for the population at large, a substantial proportion of so-called "accidental" pregnancies are not accidents in the technical sense at all but the inevitable consequence of taking too many "Russian-roulette"-type chances.

Table 19-3 shows that for couples using one method of contraception,

**Table 19-3—Comparative Effectiveness of Contraceptive Methods**

Circumstances Governing Conceptions	METHOD				
	Condom	Diaphragm	Withdrawal	Douche	Rhythm
Intentional	67%	66%	49%	46%	44%
Unintentional					
Method failed	14	15	13	17	30
Method not used at time of conception	19	19	38	37	26
Total conceptions	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Adapted from Freedman, 1959: 209. Source: Pregnancies after first use of specified method by those who used only one method.

the chief source of unintended pregnancies is taking chances by discontinuing its use. In coitus interruptus the husband fails to withdraw soon enough. In douching the wife doesn't get out of bed soon enough after intercourse. Taking chances with rhythm often means narrowing the fertile interval so much that the period is no longer "safe." Generally speaking, human failures are most common where the couple must undertake contraceptive action "late in the game" of intercourse. But no matter what the preferred method, chance-taking produces a high margin of error.

*Technical Difficulties in Contraceptive Effectiveness.* In Table 19-3, rhythm is the only method with a high accident rate. Ovulatory variability is so great that couples often get caught in unintended conceptions when they thought they were safe.

Research with couples who take relatively few chances and whose technical competence may be inferred from their high incomes provides another way of measuring technical effectiveness. Under these relatively ideal circumstances, the diaphragm-and-jelly method provides an average of 46 years' protection (Westoff, 1953: 927). Translated into practical terms, this means about every third couple experiences an unintended pregnancy sometime during a fifteen-year, premenopause interval of attempting to prevent conception by this method.

Some accidents result in children born sooner than intended. Relatively few result in "surplus" children, that is, in families larger than the parents' preferred number. In Detroit, for example, only 8 per cent of the wives interviewed in 1955 said they already had or expected to have more than their ideal number (Blood and Wolfe, p. 124). In the last analysis some wives wind up with more children than they expect and some couples revise their expectations upward to accommodate unexpected arrivals. Still others, however, turn to illegal induced abortions to cope with contraceptive failures, especially when their preferred family size has already been reached—though with improved technological and human efficiency in contraceptive practice, the utilization of this drastic "solution" has been decreasing (Gebhard, 1958: 114).

*Success in Family Planning.* When these factors are put together, a relatively small number of families succeed in having just the number of children they want when they want them, though others profess not to care. The high degree of rationality required for successfully planning both the number and spacing of children is rarely achieved.

**Table 19-4—Success in Family Planning, by Education of Wife**

Success in Family Planning	Education of Wife			
	Grade School	1-3 Years	4 Years	College
Deficient due to fecundity impairments	48%	37%	31%	25%
Fecund nonplanners	17	13	10	7
Fecund planners				
Number and spacing planned	3	9	19	27
Number only planned	7	14	12	14
Accidental "wanted" children	14	19	21	22
Accidental "unwanted" children	11	8	6	5
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of families	377	681	1,236	417

Adapted from Freedman, 1959: 51, 118, 120.

Table 19-4 shows that only college-educated women are appreciably successful in planning their families. As education decreases, the proportion with "surplus" children increases. On the other hand, the larger proportion of fecund planners among better educated wives increases the risk of unintended conceptions. Actually, much of the difference between wives by education lies in the greater readiness of higher status wives to rationalize their contraceptive failures. At low-status levels, by contrast, deficiencies in income, housing, and other facilities make unintended children harder to take. On the other hand, even more low-status wives make no attempt to control their fertility. Presumably, those least anxious to have children make the attempt, so their failure is particularly difficult to take.

For American couples as a whole, the greatest hazard is too few rather than too many children. Nevertheless, for the fecund majority, only the use of family planning—precarious as it is—prevents even more disappointment than is now the case. Certainly, when deficiencies, excesses, and mistimings are put together, the inability of most families to manage this vital aspect of family life is striking, despite the advances of medicine and pharmacy to date. Even for highly educated couples, successful planning is the exception rather than the rule.

Nevertheless, for those who want to try, we turn to the evidence for ideal child-spacing and family size patterns.

## Child-Spacing

Two issues are involved in child-spacing: the interval between marriage and the birth of the first child, and the interval between successive children. The actual pattern of child-bearing for American families is shown in Table 19-5.

**Table 19-5—Child-Spacing, by Wife's Religion**

<i>Average Interval in Months</i>	<i>Protestant</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Total</i>
Marriage to first birth	27	23	26
First to second birth	36	33	35
Second to third birth	36	33	35
Third to fourth birth	32	34	33
Fourth to fifth birth	32	25	29
Fifth to sixth birth	27	25	26

From Freedman, 1959: 279, and unpublished data from the same study supplied by P. K. Whelpton of the Scripps Foundation.

Due to fewer attempts at child-spacing and to reliance on less effective methods, Catholic intervals are slightly briefer than Protestant ones. Nevertheless, the basic pattern is essentially the same—two years from marriage to the birth of the first child, then three-year intervals to each succeeding child except in families with more than four children. The latter have shorter intervals both because they wish to have more children and also because they include fecund nonplanners who control neither the spacing nor the size of their families. Since the average American family has three children, we can safely generalize that the typical interval between children is three years.

Both these intervals are longer than they used to be. As late as 1940 the median interval between marriage and the first birth was only one year, whereas with the 1950 census the interval jumped to two years (Glick, 1955). This drastic change reflected the fact that more families were postponing their first pregnancy until they felt ready for child-bearing.

### READINESS FOR CHILD-BEARING

The next chapter describes in detail the impact of children. At this point a preview is needed of the marital, financial, and emotional prerequisites for making the great transition from marriage to parenthood.

*Marital Readiness.* No matter how wealthy or well adjusted a man and woman may be, they are seldom ready to have children when they first get married. Learning how to be a good husband and wife is job enough for the first year without taking on the complexities of parent-



hood. An interval as a married couple provides a smoother transition from the activities of dating. It also provides poorly matched couples with a testing period in which to find out whether they can make a go of marriage at all. Otherwise, young parents may become trapped in an unworkable marriage:

I've been trying to get away ever since I got married, but I've never succeeded. The children started coming too soon, and now I feel I have to stick it out for their sakes until they're grown up. If it hadn't been for them, I would have divorced Hank long ago.

For most couples the question is not whether marriage will work but how soon their interaction pattern will be ready for the adjustments of pregnancy and parenthood. There is no set answer to this question. Every couple must answer it for themselves. A minimum of one year prior to conception is often suggested as a rule of thumb.

Shorter intervals are advisable chiefly for couples who marry so late in life that menopause for the wife is dangerously close. In special cases longer intervals are needed to prevent the difficulties for both partners involved in separated parenthood (where separation is foreseeable):

When I came back from overseas, the son I'd never seen was almost two years old. Of course, he didn't know who I was. My wife and he had come to depend on each other so much that I felt like an intruder. It didn't make coming home any easier for me to have to break into that charmed circle of theirs.

The first pregnancy and first child are such significant experiences that few husbands want to miss the opportunity to share them and few wives to miss their husband's help and emotional support.

*Financial Readiness.* How much does it cost to have a baby—and then to keep it? Delivery and hospitalization expenses may be covered by insurance. Otherwise the former reflects the patient's ability to pay, and the latter depends chiefly on the number of days spent in the hospital. In addition there is the cost of prenatal and postnatal care. Medical expenses may total several hundred dollars if they have to be paid out of pocket.

The cost of initial equipment such as crib, bathinette, and baby carriage depends on whether new ones are bought or hand-me-downs used. In any case they should be budgeted in advance.

Once the baby arrives, his impact on the budget is felt gradually. As he grows older, his food and clothing consumption increases rather steadily. (A 1954 Swedish report by Dr. Erland Hofsten averaged the cost of a single child at 25 per cent more than the requirements for a childless married couple.) If the husband's income goes up correspondingly, increased costs may be taken in stride. If salary raises cannot be depended on, long-range planning may be in order. On the other hand,

couples struggling for upward social mobility tend to postpone their first child while they concentrate their limited funds on training and equipping the husband to get his career off to an extra-good start (Tien, 1961).

More critical than the added costs a child imposes is the loss of the wife's income for couples who have geared their standard of living to two incomes. Financial readiness under such circumstances involves budgeting reduced income as well as increased expenses.

*Emotional Readiness.* Those who are mature enough to be ready for marriage are usually mature enough two years later to be ready for parenthood. However, some couples marry prematurely and others with the necessary skills for marital interaction lack the ability to take on the added responsibilities of child-bearing and child-rearing. Much of the emotional strain on the mother depends on how rapidly subsequent children are born. Sears (1957: 58) finds that young mothers with several children on their hands feel overwhelmed and take out their frustration on their children by treating them coldly. Older women, by contrast, manage better because of their greater emotional maturity.

The most important sign of emotional readiness for parenthood is wanting to have children. Though the desire for children is almost universal, occasional exceptions occur. Some women don't want to be bothered. Those who are wrapped up in themselves or who have been embittered toward parenthood by their own distraught mothers may fear the responsibility of having children:

Faye flatly told Louie that she would never under any circumstances have children and that if he would be unhappy without them, the wedding would be cancelled. He thought her mind would change so the wedding ceremony was performed. They have now been married six years, but to his great unhappiness she has not changed her feelings. In addition to thoroughly disliking children as such, Faye takes great pride in her appearance and abhors the thought of losing her slim figure during and after pregnancy. Too, she spends her days figure-skating and playing tennis which she is loath to give up. She steadfastly maintains that having children is to end all independence.

Of course, people's ideas sometimes change. A girl such as Faye might find herself short of tennis partners as other young wives turn into young mothers. Being left out of conversations about discipline and diapers could be incentive enough to change her mind. Sometimes people grow up and tire of adolescent play. Then the experience of motherhood may look more attractive.

As long as it doesn't, any wife is wise to avoid it. The fact that one bears a child doesn't guarantee that one will love it. No figure is more tragic than an unwanted, rejected child except, perhaps, his guilt-laden mother.

Hardly less important is the husband's readiness for parenthood. This matters partly because a father's relationship to his children is almost as influential as a mother's. Also his moral support and helpfulness are important to his wife when the going gets tough with children.

Most girls look forward to becoming mothers from their earliest doll play. American boys less often anticipate their role as fathers. Hence, the transition from readiness for marriage to readiness for parenthood is in some respects sharper for the man:

When I fell in love with Adrienne I was very anxious to get married—and we did after a whirlwind courtship. We got along real well with each other and had a wonderful time that first year. Then Adrienne began to hint around about wanting a baby. To tell the truth, I'd never thought much about it before. I'd had very little contact with kids and always felt a bit embarrassed when I had to deal with them because I didn't know how to behave. So it took me a while to get used to the idea. Eventually I came around.

Comparing all three aspects of readiness for parenthood, Westoff (1961: 119) finds that the largest group of couples feel unready financially (41 per cent), whereas 26 per cent wish they had had more time to enjoy things together, and 19 per cent feel they didn't have time to get adjusted to marriage. Perhaps because it is so tangible, financial readiness is the most difficult achievement. Though most wives are satisfied with their actual timing of the first birth, twice as many feel it came too soon as too late and the most enthusiastic wives are those who waited the longest—two to three years (Westoff, p. 117).

The research evidence suggests the value of postponing the birth of the first child until at least two years after marriage. Though special circumstances make this a highly variable matter, an increasing proportion of Americans agree that at least some delay is desirable. As the age for marriage declines, delaying parenthood becomes correspondingly more urgent.

#### SPACING SUBSEQUENT CHILDREN

In actual practice second and third children tend to be born at three-year intervals (see Table 19-5). Is this spacing ideal? Westoff's young respondents are most enthusiastic about second children born only two to two-and-a-half years after the first (p. 120). The problem, as they see it, is to balance their desire to provide a playmate for the first child against their desire to avoid too much child-care. Were they to have a third child (only two-child families were studied), the playmate problem would figure less than the need to limit the burden of child-care.

In general, then, young American mothers who have just borne their second child prefer to space their first two children less than three years

apart. Indeed, bunching children—rather than spacing them—seems to be the popular American norm. Objective research, however, suggests that wider spacing (three to four years apart) may deserve more serious consideration.

*Housekeeping Advantages.* Young mothers recognize that increased ease in child-care comes from spacing children farther apart (they recommend two-and-one-half- to five-year intervals for this purpose). Tangible confirmation comes from a study by Wiegand and Gross (1958) of fatigue among mothers of young children. Tiredness increases (a) the younger the child and (b) the larger the number of children. When these factors are combined in a large number of preschool children, housekeeping and child-care for unhousebroken, unsocialized children is difficult. Though most mothers are glad to serve their children, their physical resources are not inexhaustible. The result is that mothers of closely spaced children cannot perform either their housekeeping or their child-rearing and marital roles as adequately as those whose children are spaced farther apart.

The energy saved by spacing children an extra year or two apart more than offsets the lessened vitality of the mother because she is older. Aging is a gradual process but the difference between a two-year and a four-year interval is drastic in its repercussions for the mother as housekeeper.

*Child-Rearing Advantages.* Overtired mothers cannot give their children the attention they deserve. Fatigue is probably one reason why Sears finds that mothers show less warmth and affection toward children bunched close together, not only while they are infants but also as much as five years afterwards. He adds, however, a second interpretation (1957: 57):

There has been much emphasis in the literature on child development on the strength of the child's attachment to the mother during his first two or three years of life; less attention has been paid to the reciprocal of the child's feelings—the mother's strong protective attachment to the young child. This maternal "dependency" on the child must be gradually resolved, just as the child's dependency on the mother must be modified. . . . A two-year-old child obviously has difficulty in adjusting himself to the dilution of the relationship with his mother which is necessarily implied in the birth of a new sibling, but it is also difficult for the mother to make this adjustment to the new child during the period when the nurturant relationship to the older child is still at its height.

Since maternal warmth is indispensable to the successful socialization of children (see Chapter 21), any gain in warmth from wider child-spacing is highly valuable to the child. Widely spaced children also gain extra attention from the mother to their educational potentialities. Conversely, when too many children are born too close together to an im-

mature, young mother, she can hardly give them the attention they need if they are to be motivated to achieve.

Rosen (1961) finds that when as many as three children are born to working-class mothers still in their early twenties, the children's achievement motivation is conspicuously low. He suggests (p. 584) this may be caused by the inability of older children to take care of younger ones when they are bunched too closely together (since they are all young simultaneously):

In this case the young mother, particularly if she is lower class and unable to obtain help, may simply be overwhelmed. She will have little time or energy for the supervision and complex training in achievement that the development of achievement motivation requires.

Although middle-class mothers in Rosen's study manage despite these handicaps to motivate their children to achieve, in general we can infer that the faster children are born, the more likely they are to suffer or, conversely, the more strenuously the parents will have to extend themselves to meet the children's needs.

Sears suggests still another advantage in spacing—lessened sibling rivalry. Antagonism to the new sibling results from being displaced at the tender age of two when language skills are too weak to be able to understand what is going on. By three or four, sex education and loving orientation could help the child anticipate the birth of a young sibling, making adjustment easier. What the naive young mothers of infant second children in Westoff's sample don't realize is that closeness in age makes sibling rivalry more likely at the same time that it makes companionship more possible. The problem is to space children far enough apart to minimize competitiveness without making companionship impossible. Three- or four-year intervals probably achieve this better than briefer ones.

*Financial Advantages.* Having children "thick and fast" concentrates their costs at a stage in the father's career when his income is low. Spreading them out delays the later children's expenses until the father's income has more opportunity to rise.

Later in the family life cycle, the financial repercussions of child-bunching are accentuated for parents whose children go to college. As Chapter 14 pointed out, many families have difficulty meeting their children's college expenses. Most families depend on current income for this purpose. If more than one child is in college at the same time, this is much more difficult. From this point of view, a four-year interval between children is advantageous.

To summarize, intervals of three to four years between children have advantages for both parents and children, popular belief to the contrary notwithstanding. At least, the popular ideology seems worth re-examination.

## Family Size

The actual number of children born per family declined steadily in the United States to a low ebb of 2.4 per married woman in the Depression years (Freedman, 1959: 228). Spurred by World War II but continuing for some years thereafter, a postwar baby boom pushed the birthrate back to pre-World War I levels. Though some of this increase represented a revival in the popularity of four-child families, it resulted even more from the almost complete disappearance of voluntary childlessness or single-childness. At the same time large families also went out of style. In other words an increasing proportion of families had from two to four children. Families winding up with less than two or more than four usually couldn't help it—suffering either fecundity handicaps or fecundity accidents, respectively.

### PREFERRED FAMILY SIZES

As this chapter was written, preliminary results from P. K. Whelpton's 1960 follow-up of the earlier Freedman survey suggested that the baby boom might be ending. The youngest wives interviewed in 1960 expected to have less than three children apiece (average 2.8), whereas five years earlier the corresponding age group had expected appreciably more (3.1). Perhaps the overcrowded schools, governmental deficits, and other consequences of the American population explosion stimulate reconsideration of the ideal family size. In any case the popular choices clearly lie in the range from two to four.

Table 19-6 shows that college-educated women prefer a smaller number of children and are especially apt to prefer three. Blood and Wolfe (pp. 122-23) interpret this narrowing of the range of preferences as follows:

In practically eliminating subnormal preferences, education provides women with husbands sufficiently prosperous to release the more or less universal American desire to have one child for the sake of the parents and at least one more for the sake of the first. In reducing preferences for outsize families, education creates in women more interests outside the home, not at the expense of having any children but certainly at the expense of being tied down by a long string of them. Educated women are also familiar with child psychology and its emphasis on giving more love and affection to each child. The easiest way a mother can give more attention to each child is to have fewer of them. By and large, most Americans say that they want fewer children because they love them so much, not because they like them so little. Children are not nuisances to be avoided, but individuals who deserve a fair deal within the limits of the parents' ability to provide for them.

*Competing Values.* The previous quotation suggests that one reason why college alumnae prefer fewer children is that they have more

**Table 19-6—Preferred Number of Children, by Education of Wife**

Preferred Number of Children	EDUCATION OF WIFE		
	Grade School	High School	College
None	5%	2%	—
One	1	1	1%
Two	19	25	22
Three	18	26	37
Four	39	35	29
Five	5	5	8
Six or more	13	7	2
Total	100%	100%	100%
Mean	3.52	3.34	3.31
No. of families	149	393	65

Source: Blood and Wolfe, 1960: 122.

interests outside the home. Career-oriented wives similarly tend to limit their child-bearing preferences.

Both husband and wife may have alternative uses to which they wish to devote their resources of time and money. Some occupations and avocations are difficult to integrate with parenthood. The economic choices involved in having children are even more apparent.

A famous study in the 1930's found that it cost three years' wages at moderate income levels to raise one child to age eighteen. At higher income levels more dollars were spent per child, but the proportion dropped closer to two years' salary (Dublin and Lotka, 1946: 57). The larger the number of children, the less spent per child. (In this restricted sense, they come "cheaper by the dozen.") The aggregate cost to the family, however, rises with the number of children. Couples with expensive consumption tastes usually limit the number of children accordingly. Either that, or they suffer the consequences:

A minor executive I know has two school-age children. He and his wife speak of them only with bitter resentment. They had both dreamed of traveling and of living well with few monetary worries. Their children, they feel, have ruined their lives and at the present time have not even the kindness to appreciate their parents' sacrifices. Too, they feel that their children's shortcomings, whether real or imagined, are but more bitterness to be tasted in addition to all they have had to miss in life. To them the arrival of children has meant giving up "everything" on the woman's part and plodding along in a secure but distasteful job for the father.

In this extreme case two children was too many. For most families it would take several more to hurt this much.

Especially for devout Catholics children hold such high priority that preferred family sizes run large. Even when carefully matched on socio-economic characteristics, Catholic couples differ significantly from Protestant and Jewish couples in their family-size ideals, preferring 3.7,

2.8, and 2.6 children respectively (Freedman, 1961). Generally speaking, given the same income (one of the matching variables), the average Catholic family prefers to invest in one child extra. Even for Catholics, however, the range of choice still lies largely between the usual two-to-four limits, the difference resulting chiefly from higher preferences within that range.

*"A Boy for You, a Girl for Me."* Because children come in two sexes, child-bearing preferences are based on assumptions about the number of sons and daughters. Americans so strongly prefer having both sexes that families unlucky enough to have only one kind frequently raise their preferred number in hopes of breaking the spell. Especially when all the children are girls, parents extend themselves in an effort to have a boy, but the tendency is almost as strong under converse circumstances (Westoff, 1961: 294).

#### THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAMILY SIZE

Information on preferred family size is relatively abundant, but the objective consequences of family size are less clear. Blood and Wolfe (p. 262) find that Detroit wives with three children are the most satisfied with their marriages, but it is not certain that this is a cause-and-effect relationship. Perhaps it is. Perhaps beyond a certain point additional children interfere with the ability of the partners to communicate with each other, to spend leisure time together—in short to maintain a personal relationship with each other. Perhaps three is the ideal number for most Americans. At least, the college-educated wives in Detroit feel it is, given their income, housing, and other circumstances.

For the moment the conclusion that seems clearest from the available research is that marital adjustment increases with increasing success in controlling fertility according to the couple's own desires (Reed, 1947: 423). More than three children *may* have negative repercussions for the average marriage but surely do for those whose ideal is only three. Generalizations about ideal family size are still precarious, but the benefits of achieving one's own ideal are clear. That, together with proper spacing, is the purpose of family planning.



# *The*

## *Advent of Children*

Having her first child is a revolutionary personal experience for any woman and adding a child a social revolution for every couple. The transition to parenthood may be likened to the transition to marriage—except that the earlier change is primarily social and the later one primarily biological. Conception is like getting engaged: the nine months of pregnancy, the engagement period; childbirth, the rite of passage into parenthood; and the hospital sojourn, the honeymoon for mother and child.

### Pregnancy

For some weeks after conception women are pregnant but don't know it. The fertilized egg moves slowly down the oviduct to the uterus whose walls have been prepared to receive it by the influence of two hormones, progesterone and estrogen. Here the embryo becomes embedded in the spongy tissues of the uterine wall.

A week or two later the woman misses her menstrual period because a hormone (chorionic gonadotrophin) produced by the embryo maintains the needed lining of the uterus. This hormone also inhibits the ripening of other eggs in the ovaries.

Within five weeks, a hormone is produced in sufficient quantities to be detectable in urine specimens when these are injected into experimental rabbits, mice, or frogs. However, few couples are impatient enough about confirming their pregnancy to resort to laboratory tests.

Symptoms that *may* indicate pregnancy are skipped menstrual periods, feelings of nausea or excessive fatigue, tenderness, tingling, or enlargement of the breasts, or more frequent urination. Each of these may have causes other than pregnancy, and some of them (especially nausea) are not universally present in pregnancy. Nevertheless, the more signs there are, the greater the chances that a diagnosis of pregnancy is correct.

#### GROWTH OF THE FETUS

At the end of the first month the embryo is still extremely small and not always readily recognizable even on autopsy. Not until the third month is it big enough to have its name changed from "embryo" to "fetus." In the fourth month the heartbeat becomes audible through the obstetrician's stethoscope, and in the fifth the mother can feel the baby's kicking and stretching movements within her.

**Table 20-1—Average Size of Fetus, by Monthly Intervals**

Age	Length	Weight
One month	$\frac{1}{4}$ inch	Tiny fraction of an ounce
Two months	1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches	$\frac{1}{14}$ ounce
Three months	3 inches	1 ounce
Four months	6–8 inches	5–6 ounces
Five months	10–12 inches	1 pound
Six months	14 inches	2 pounds
Seven months	16 inches	3 pounds
Eight months	18 inches	5 pounds
Nine months	20 inches	7–8 pounds

Adapted from Bowman, 1960: 403–05.

Not until the seventh month does a prematurely-born infant have much chance of survival, and even then the odds depend on size and a host of precarious factors. At maturity the average fetus is surrounded by three to seven pounds of tissues and fluids which are also discharged in the birth process.

*Danger of Miscarriage.* Below a certain weight any child born dead or alive is called "spontaneously aborted" or "miscarried," not "premature." Fetal deaths occur in one-sixth of all known pregnancies and affect one-fourth of all wives sooner or later (Gebhard, 1958: 119).

Figure 20-1 shows that the miscarriage rate rises with age, especially past age thirty-five. Since most wives finish their planned child-bearing before then, the number of cases involved in the older years is small.



Adapted from Gebhard, 1958: 137.

**Figure 20-1. Percentage of Pregnancies Ending in Miscarriage, by Age of Wife**

Miscarriages are less tragic than they seem for they usually involve defective germ plasm incapable of normal development. [Guttmacher (1957: 402) reports that more than two-thirds of all spontaneously aborted fetuses are observably malformed.] Where malformation is extensive, nature gets rid of it promptly. The third month is the peak period for miscarriages. Fetuses that survive into the fourth month stand excellent chances of reaching full term and of being substantially normal.

Since miscarriages are usually inevitable, they are rarely caused by the mother's activities, even vigorous ones. According to Dr. Guttmacher (p. 405), "you cannot shake a good egg loose any more than a storm can shake unripe normal fruit from a tree." However, a tragic few women have trouble carrying their pregnancies to successful conclusions. In these cases medical treatment—hormones, vitamins, bed rest—may prevent miscarriages.

#### CHANGES IN THE MOTHER

In many respects changes in the mother's body and secondarily in her attitudes come more rapidly than in the child. At least while the embryo is still too small to be felt in the abdomen, the mother's bodily chemistry is transformed to provide for its nurture.

*Physical Changes.* The mother's body is marvelously adaptable to the size and needs of her growing child. Since pregnancy is a natural state of affairs, it is not an illness or a medical "problem." Most expectant mothers experience no change in their general health. However, in one study three times as many mothers said their health improved as said it deteriorated (Landis, 1950).

On the other hand, occasional nausea is a typical consequence of pregnancy, especially during the first three months (Poffenberger, 1952). Psychologically, some women react to pregnancy as though it were an illness, worrying about their bodily changes, emphasizing the pain and suffering involved, depending heavily on their doctor to help them get over the condition and "return to normal," feeling that they should be excused from normal responsibilities and duties because of their pregnancy. Rosengren (1961) finds that women who are unhappy or insecure in other respects are more apt to assume this "sick" role during pregnancy (for example, low-status women, those married to less-well-educated husbands or whose husbands are downward mobile). Moreover, negative reactions are intensified when pregnancy conflicts with other values in the woman's life (for example, aspirations for material things such as a home and furniture or the values derived by career women from high-status jobs). In other words, how well a pregnant woman feels depends on the adequacy of her personal and marital resources and on the centrality of familistic values in her philosophy of life.

The interaction of cultural and physical factors is apparent in McCammon's report (1951) that nausea among American Indians was confined to those who had learned to speak English (that is, who were marginal women in conflict between Indian and American society). Within American society Robertson (1946) finds nausea associated with disturbed sexual functioning, including lack of orgasm and dislike of intercourse. Such findings apply especially to women with persistent, severe nausea and vomiting. They illustrate, however, the profound repercussions of social and psychological factors on physical well-being at times of rapid change such as pregnancy (and, incidentally, menopause).

Even for the majority of women whose health is as good or better than ever during pregnancy, periodic visits to the obstetrician are recommended, especially in the first pregnancy. This is both a precaution against things that occasionally go wrong in pregnancy and a means of guaranteeing optimum conditions for mother and child during this period of rapid physical changes. Since doctors vary in their competence and their philosophy about childbirth, it is useful to choose one in whom the patient can have complete confidence.

Many pregnant women have trouble keeping their weight down to the normal gain of 18–20 pounds. The doctor may prescribe strict limits on starches and sweets, since excess weight is not only hard on the figure but also makes childbirth more difficult. Even if the weight gain is not excessive, the growing baby strikingly alters the abdominal profile and presses inward on the intestines and bladder. As a result, constipation and frequent urination plague the last weeks of pregnancy.

*Mental Changes.* In the preceding section it was apparent that mental

factors affect the physical symptoms of pregnancy. But what are the usual mental reactions as such?

Most women have looked forward to pregnancy and childbirth from childhood so that it brings a sense of completion, of fulfilling their destiny. Perhaps there is added satisfaction in achieving something men never could. At worst, pregnancy is a necessary evil prerequisite to attaining children. It is seldom resented wholeheartedly, except when conception itself was unwanted. Even under extreme circumstances, negative reactions are strongest when pregnancy is first discovered. As time progresses, expectant mothers become increasingly reconciled to the prospect of having a child (Newton, 1955: 26).

The first pregnancy is an exciting experience. Not that dramatic things happen all the time, but the whole sequence is new. The first discovery that she is pregnant, the bodily changes, the first fluttering sense of the baby's movement inside the body—these are events quite out of the ordinary that have been long anticipated.

Despite euphoria and quiet elation, there are negative aspects too. Especially during the last few weeks, the nine months seem like they will never end and the disadvantages of pregnancy are conspicuous. Many a woman at full term pictures herself as a "blimp" with a touch of bitterness underlying the humor. When it's difficult to sit, stand, walk, or sleep comfortably due to the heavy weight in front, anyone could be pardoned for looking forward to childbirth with extraordinary eagerness.

#### THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP DURING PREGNANCY

Much of the wife's reaction to pregnancy depends on her husband's (and his on hers). If he is happy about the pregnancy, can sympathize with her negative as well as her positive feelings, and does not regret her change of figure, her morale will be reinforced. Except for jealousy of the coming baby by insecure husbands married to narcissistic wives, most couples take pregnancy in their stride.

In one study of obstetrical patients, interaction patterns didn't change much. The partners' feelings toward each other notably improved, however. Half the couples said their love became deeper, and nearly two-thirds said having a baby on the way drew them closer together. Wives especially felt their husbands appreciated and understood them better (Stott, 1952).

In exceptional cases where the husband fails to respond to the wife's need for extra love and sympathy, she feels lonely and deserted. Faced with a new and perhaps terrifying experience, her loneliness is intensified by losing contact with her colleagues when she quits work. These voids in her life are more than filled after she passes through the crisis of

childbirth and becomes responsible for her child's care. Illustrative of the intense but often temporary reactions of pregnant women to indifferent husbands is the professional experience of Dr. Katherine Greene as Washtenaw County (Michigan) Marriage Counselor: of fourteen wives who filed suit for divorce while pregnant, all but two changed their minds after the child was born.

Fear of childbirth and anxiety about the health and normality of the fetus are so widespread (63 per cent and 41 per cent of Poffenberger's student wives) that the husband has a crucial supportive role during pregnancy. Genné (1956: 15) points out that "the husband is the most important single influence on his wife." His empathy and understanding are put to the test during this period.

*Sexual Readjustments.* During the first three months of pregnancy the smallness of the embryo makes such little change in the wife's physique that the average couple's sex life remains much the same. However, to minimize chances of miscarriage, some couples are advised by their doctors to restrict intercourse from the very beginning.

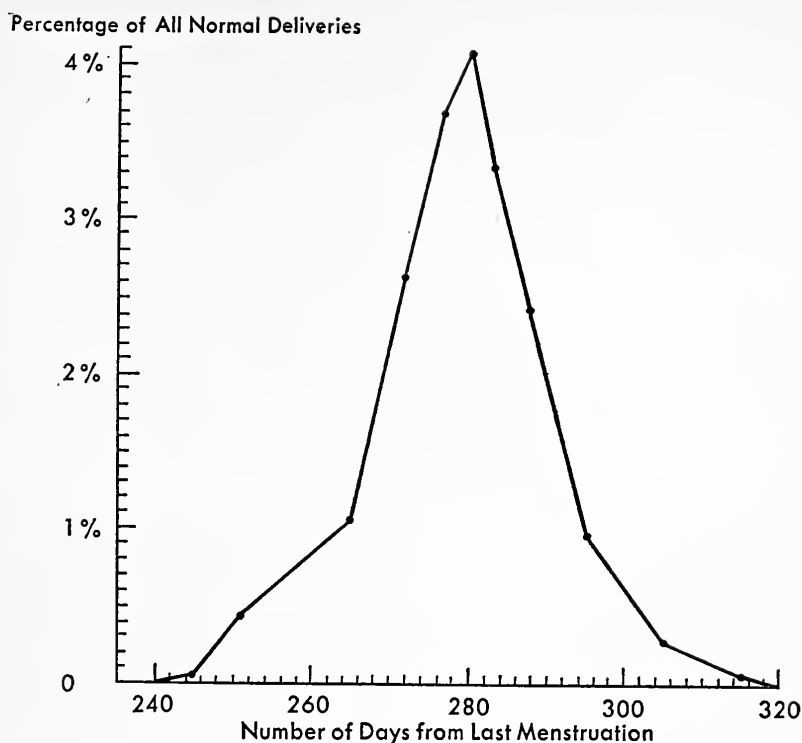
During the remainder of pregnancy the typical husband's desire to have intercourse declines nearly as rapidly as the wife's (Landis, 1950). This suggests that sexual readjustment is not difficult for most couples. From a medical standpoint intercourse is usually permissible up until the last six weeks, when the baby gets in the way anyhow. The risk of infection just before and after childbirth prevent intercourse then.

*Economic Readjustments.* Chapter 14 described the financial repercussions of losing the wife's income. Not only from the financial standpoint but also for psychological reasons, there are advantages in continuing work well into pregnancy. Just as long engagements are hard to endure, inactive pregnancies are hard to wait out.

Once the wife quits work, time can be devoted to preparing for childbirth. Exercise classes, prenatal classes, baby showers, and conversations with young mothers help get the mother ready physically and psychologically. Time can be allotted to preparing the nursery and layette too. But hardly nine months. Presumably, therefore, the more active the wife is economically and otherwise, the less arduous the waiting period and the smoother the transition to her new role in life.

## Childbirth

Pregnancies vary greatly in length. The date of delivery is normally calculated at 280 days from the last menstruation. However, the date of conception is not a fixed interval following menstruation, nor is the interval from conception to delivery standardized. Hence, considerable latitude should be allowed in planning the date of childbirth.



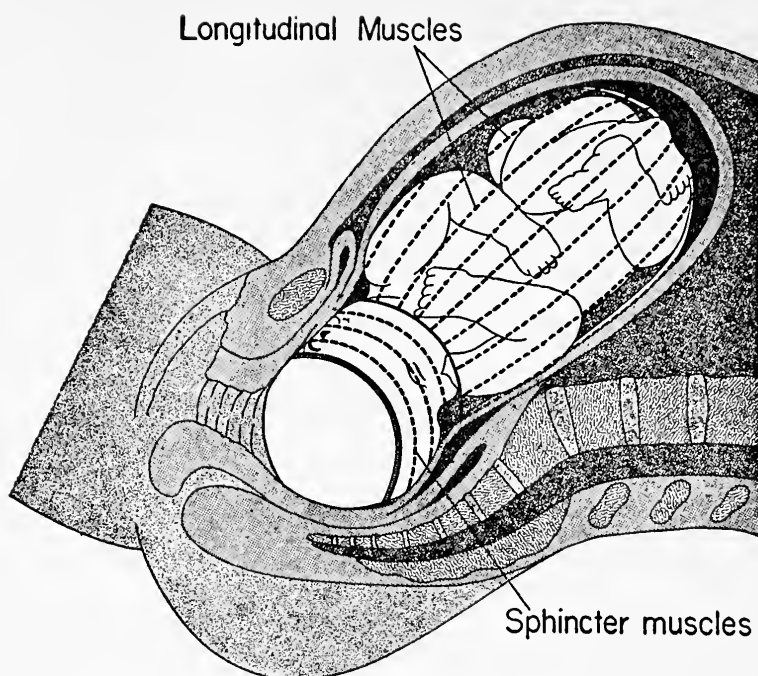
**Figure 20-2. Duration of Pregnancy (from last menstruation)**

Figure 20-2 shows that only one birthdate out of twenty-five is predicted correctly to the day. To be sure, the middle 50 per cent fall within a two-week interval, but the remaining predictions are more than a week off and 10 per cent as much as three weeks early or late.

#### ONSET OF LABOR

Labor, when it finally comes, usually begins gradually—especially for women who have never had a baby before. Sometimes the “bag of waters” surrounding the baby breaks first, precipitating labor. Sometimes the first sign is a thick, mucous, bloody discharge from the vagina. More often the muscular contractions of the uterus begin first. Since there may be false starts, the usual procedure is to keep track of the gradually decreasing interval between contractions. If they come regularly as often as every ten minutes, the chances are that “this is it,” so the mother goes to the hospital.

The first stage of labor consists of dilation of the cervix until the mouth of the uterus is open wide enough for the baby to pass through. (See



**Figure 20-3. Uterine Muscles Involved in Childbirth**

Fig. 20-3). The cervix consists of a band of circular muscles that have been contracted throughout the life of the woman up to this point. These muscles are potentially elastic, however, and are capable of stretching until the head (usually the first and always the largest part) of the baby is ready to pass through.

Relaxation is the sphincter muscles' natural response to being nudged by the baby when the longitudinal muscles of the uterine walls begin to contract. If the mother is tense and fearful, her sphincter muscles tighten up, blocking the egress of the baby and creating a painful situation.

The mother's task during this stage is to relax. Between contractions she may chat with her husband in the hospital room, read, or otherwise busy herself. When a contraction comes, lying back and consciously relaxing helps the dilation process. Deep, slow abdominal breathing helps the baby rotate into position for passing out through the pelvic opening.

The so-called Read method of "natural childbirth" emphasizes advance preparation of the mother for the long, slow process of dilation. Dr. Grantley Dick Read (1944) believes that fear of the unknown tenses the uterine sphincter muscles. Such fear is reduced by education and



training for parenthood, giving the expectant mother confidence about the experience she is undergoing. Trained mothers deliver faster than untrained ones. [The time span from onset of labor to completion of delivery was cut from twenty-one hours to seventeen for first deliveries given the benefit of training (Thoms, 1950: 76).] Similarly, for all women subsequent deliveries tend to be easier than the first one, since relaxation the second time usually comes easier.

*Medical Assistance.* Even mothers and doctors philosophically committed to the natural method of childbirth may use drugs to relieve pain and ease tension during dilation, especially for the first baby. During the delivery process itself, various gasses are available which may be inhaled continuously or intermittently during contractions to ease the pain involved. Recently, hypnosis has been used by some doctors with responsive patients to achieve similar results. Sometimes the doctor aids the egress of the child by surgically widening the cervical opening or in emergency cases by using forceps to pull the baby out. Normally, however, these drastic measures are not necessary, especially if the mother has been trained to her role in childbirth.

#### DELIVERY

While the cervix is dilating, the baby begins to move through the vagina or "birth canal." Rhythmic contractions of the longitudinal uterine muscles force the baby out, a push at a time. The mother may aid this process by gently "bearing down," that is, voluntarily reinforcing the effect of the uterine contraction. During each contraction she can take several deep breaths and then hold her breath at the peak of the contraction. Active cooperation with the birth process is hard work, but rewarding both in speeding up the delivery and giving the mother a sense of participation. Where permitted by medical authorities, the husband's presence may be appreciated by the wife.

Movement of the baby through the birth canal requires stretching the vulva. Panting like a puppy during emergence of the head prevents pushing at this time and insures a gentler delivery. If the mother has not been excessively drugged, the baby emerges wide awake, and his spontaneous crying enables his lungs to fill with air and start the breathing process.

*The Afterbirth.* Discharge of the placenta along with the cord and membranes is called the "afterbirth." This occurs spontaneously five to fifteen minutes after the baby is born. Usually the mother is so busy holding her baby and discussing her experience that the afterbirth occurs without much notice on her part. If help is needed, the mother can aid the contraction of the longitudinal muscles as in the second stage of labor.

*Childbirth in Retrospect.* Mothers who retain consciousness during childbirth often think of it as one of the most significant experiences of their lives. Mothers generally view it in retrospect as less painful than they anticipate in advance (Poffenberger, 1952). On the other hand, the potentialities for pain in childbirth are extensive, in extreme cases comparable to physical torture or third-degree burns (Newton, 1955: 36). The intensity of pain varies widely with the physical and psychological circumstances involved.

Following childbirth, a few women suffer a postpartum depression so severe that they have to be hospitalized. This form of psychosis is common enough to account for more than 5 per cent of all female admissions to mental hospitals (Jacobs, 1943). Depression is not, however, the usual reaction following childbirth. On the contrary, the termination of the long period of expectancy and the fascination of a child of one's own give most mothers a honeymoon-type euphoria.

#### HOSPITALIZATION

Mother and child used to be kept in the hospital two full weeks, with the wife in bed much of the time. When medical researchers discovered that confinement retards recovery, patients began getting up sooner both from normal deliveries and from surgical operations. Today, mothers are encouraged to get out of bed within twenty-four hours after delivery. By that time they have slept off much of their fatigue from the strenuous exertions of labor and delivery.

Physical activity revitalizes muscular tone and physical energy. As a result, mothers now typically go home from the hospital in three to seven days.

*Infant-Care in the Hospital.* Traditionally, American hospitals assign mother and child to separate rooms. The baby is placed in a centralized nursery which only the nursing staff is allowed to enter. Much of the responsibility for the baby's care is therefore assumed by the nurses. Consequently, infant-care tends to be scheduled and routinized. This limits the flexibility of service available to the baby, and relieves the mother of full-time responsibility. The latter is an asset to overtired veteran mothers but deprives novices of the opportunity to learn how to assume responsibility for their children.

During the 1940's medical authorities emphasized the value of flexibility in infant-care and the importance of the mother-child relationship. To facilitate these, some hospitals abandoned central nurseries in favor of "rooming-in" arrangements, placing the baby where the mother can see it and have direct contact with it any time she wishes. Sometimes the baby is in a bassinette beside the mother's bed. Sometimes a tiny

nursery is next to each hospital room so the mother can observe her child and get him at will.

Rooming-in helps new mothers gain self-confidence. Under the traditional system mothers often feared they would not know how to care for their child after leaving the hospital. But if the mother carries the primary responsibility for the child from the very beginning (with the instruction and help of nurses as needed), she gains skill in interpreting the child's needs.

The fact that the baby has the full-time attention of its mother instead of sharing one nurse with the other inhabitants of the nursery means it is more likely to get attention when it needs it. The mother is able to feed, change, or cuddle the baby whenever necessary. This gives the baby a more comfortable transition from the uterine environment where its needs were met automatically. The mother is reassured to know that her baby's needs are not being neglected by harried nurses. Also, breast feeding gets off to a better start since the baby is fed when it is hungriest (Thoms, 1950: 63).

By the time the rooming-in pair are ready to leave the hospital they are well acquainted with each other and can take up residence at home more confidently.

## From Marriage to Family Living

As soon as the first child arrives from the hospital, the pattern of life at home changes so sharply and suddenly that it is properly labeled a crisis, especially for the mother. This is not to say that changes are necessarily resented, but they are more drastic than at any other turning point in life, not excluding marriage. In many ways the difference between marriage and parenthood is greater than the difference between courtship and marriage.

### FROM DYAD TO TRIAD

"Two's company, three's a crowd" symbolizes the difference between a pair able to give their full attention to each other and a trio whose attention must be divided. Since a newborn infant is helpless and the mother has the chief responsibility for his care, this trio lacks the symmetry of new marriages. The child's advent alters the power structure, the division of labor, and the interpersonal relationship generally of the parents.

*Revised Power Structure.* With the wife's withdrawal from the labor force, she becomes more dependent on her husband for major

decisions. The younger she is and the more rapidly she acquires children, the more husband-dominant the power structure becomes:

For the wife, it appears that marriage is not as great a role transition as becoming a mother. As a working wife, she continues to participate in community life on a par with her husband. But as the mother of a new baby, she gives up her job and is confined to her home by the heavy demands of child-care. Not only is she cut off from contact with her fellow workers but even the opportunity to participate in recreational activities and organizational meetings is impaired by her baby-sitting responsibilities. Under these circumstances, parenthood brings a sudden loss of resources to the wife combined with increased need for husbandly support. It is no wonder, therefore, that the wife's dependence increases. (Blood and Wolfe, p. 43.)

*Revised Division of Labor.* The typical shift from full-time work outside the home to full-time housewifery brings corresponding changes in the allocation of domestic tasks between the partners. The husband's housework decreases sharply because the wife now becomes a full-time domestic servant. At the same time the couple share fewer tasks and role specialization increases (Blood and Wolfe, p. 70). For years to come the husband is the only wage-earner, the wife the "chief cook and bottle-washer."

*Revised Personal Relationships.* Once children arrive, the honeymoon is over. No longer can husband and wife bask in each other's companionship at home or especially outside the home. In Great Britain, "... before they had children, all couples had had far more joint activities, especially in the form of shared recreation outside the home. After their children were born, the activities of all couples had become more sharply differentiated and they had had to cut down on joint external participation" (Bott, 1957: 55).

In the American working class, housework and child-care pre-empt the wife's attention:

... the husbands seem to come in a poor third in the attention they get. The wives serve them breakfast, sometimes fix their lunch, prepare their suppers, wash and mend their clothes—but don't "waste" nearly as many words on them as on the house and children. (Rainwater, 1959: 29.)

In middle-class families wives try harder to maintain contact with their husbands, but children constitute just as much of an obstacle.

A baby inevitably alters the husband-wife relationship. Where before the two could focus their attention on each other, now there is a distraction in the midst. Or perhaps it should be called an attraction. Much of the attention of each parent now is diverted to the child. His needs and interests compete for attention with those of the partner. As more children arrive, each family member's slice of attention gets thinner. Never again, however, is the change as drastic as with the first child.

The husband gets the short end since the wife's child-rearing responsibilities require her energies to be invested in new directions. As a result, immature husbands feel neglected:

Sam got pretty pouty when our first baby was born. I suppose he really was jealous of the attention I had to give Sally. If I had to get up from the table to do something for her, he'd make some crack about having to eat all alone. If I didn't have his dinner ready on time because of a 5:00 feeding, he'd be irritable. I really think his resentment is what has made him so hard and demanding on Sally ever since.

While some ambivalence about parenthood's gains and losses is natural, most husbands share their wives with their children without protest. They recognize that this is one of the intrinsic characteristics of increased family size. But if the husband does act like a sibling rival to the baby, strategy is called for:

I think I've handled Irving's jealous streak pretty intelligently. While he's away at work, I lavish attention on the kids—playing games with them, answering their questions, telling them stories. Then when he gets home at night they're content to play by themselves, and I can listen to his report of the day's work just as though the kids weren't around.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTHOOD

In a study of young, middle-class parents, LeMasters (1957a: 353) concluded that the advent of the first child had been an extensive or severe crisis for nearly all:

The . . . couples in the crisis group appear to have almost completely romanticized parenthood. They felt that they had had very little, if any, effective preparation for parental roles. As one mother said: "We knew where babies came from, but we didn't know *what they were like*."

The trouble with babies is that when they first arrive they are completely helpless. With time they gradually become domesticated and eventually self-sufficient. But their initial impact on parents is critical precisely because parental responsibilities are so extensive from the very beginning. Since these responsibilities fall primarily on the wife, it will simplify our discussion if we focus on what happens to her life: loss of mobility, disruption of daily routines, expansion of housework, and anxiety about the child's welfare.

*Loss of Mobility.* Because of the newborn infant's helplessness, he can never be left alone and for some purposes not even entrusted to someone else. Since young parents' financial resources are usually meager, employed mother-substitutes must be correspondingly limited.

For well-to-do couples (of which the world has very few), the handicap is less. Substitute mothers can stay with the sleeping baby and

feed him too (provided he's on bottle- instead of breast-feeding). For the rest the cost of babysitters comes too high. Hence, time-out must be fitted to his majesty's schedule or his grandmother's: "I can't come then because he'll be asleep. . . . I'm sorry, but that's when he's liable to need feeding. . . . I'll have to see whether I can get a babysitter. . . . It depends on whether Steve can be home that night. . . ."

Eventually the baby starts going out too—sleeping peacefully in his bassinette or breaking into the middle of the bridge game with demands for attention. The babysitting problem may be solved by Grandma's eagerness to help out (if she lives in the same town and enjoys *her* new role). Or husband and wife take turns sitting for the neighbors, replacing the babysitter fund with barter.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that social life is usually severely curtailed, though the change has some compensations. The very fact of having a baby is a new activity—a kind of recreation as well as work. It is no accident that parents are so often described as "proud." A baby represents not only a task but also an achievement. He is "flesh of our flesh." Every development is an event for co-parent to hear about (and business partner too!). The first smile, first tooth, and first step highlight what can often be a wearing but seldom dull existence.

So if husband and wife go out less, they have more to stay in for. Instead of saying that social life is restricted, better say it is revised (except for those to whom bright lights are indispensable):

Now that Eileen is tied down more at home, I've about decided to give up Sunday morning golf. I'll miss it—especially at first when the boys call up and put the pressure on. But it will give me more of a chance to get acquainted with the baby. And I think Eileen will appreciate it too.

To be responsible full time for a baby cuts out not only external sociability but also external employment. Nor is it just a question of physical welfare. As we shall see in the next chapter, the basis for socialization is the child's emotional dependence on his parents, a dependence established in infancy by the mother's devoted service. Not until infancy is well past does extensive separation of mother and child become advisable.

We used to go out quite a bit but the money we spent that way goes to the baby's expenses now. I miss my job, too, though I wouldn't want to go back and have to leave the baby with someone. Just once in the two months since the baby came a neighbor offered to come in and we went out to the movies. Today I took the baby in the car and went to visit an old girl friend—it made me feel good to get a change of scenery.

No matter how interesting a child may be, adult companionship and outside stimulation are likely to be missed. For women who work right

up to the last months of pregnancy, the change to constant staying at home is especially sudden. By encouraging neighbors to drop in, taking the baby out in his carriage, having the husband take over in the evening so the wife can go out, feminine morale can be bolstered, enabling the wife to return to her chores with renewed vigor.

*Disruption of Routines.* In the uterus the baby was fed continuously, twenty-four hours a day, and slept whenever he felt like it, unaware of day or night. Getting adjusted to the daily routines of the adult world takes time. In the meantime most babies are irregular and unpredictable. Only a lucky few are "good" babies who wake up, take their feeding, and promptly go back to sleep. But for every one of those there are several "ordinary" babies who want that middle-of-the-night feeding, fuss at odd hours, and change their "schedule" every few days. Worse yet are those whose "three-month colic" doesn't yield to treatment.

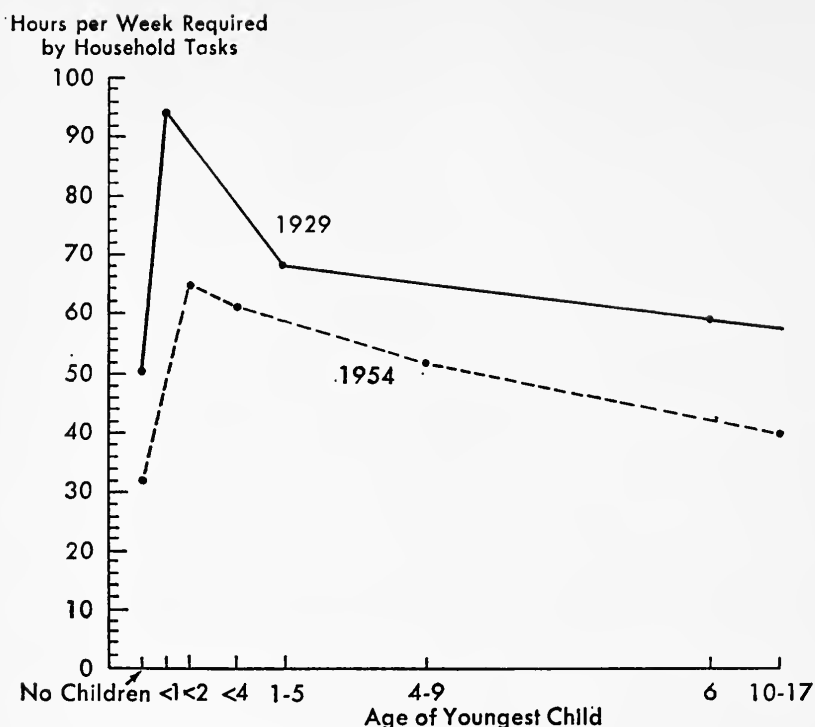
The average mother finds her sleep disrupted and her meals disturbed just at a time when she hasn't fully recovered from the labors of childbirth. As a result, she is apt to feel chronically tired, even exhausted, and unable to keep up with the demands of housework.

*Expansion of Housework.* At the same time that her duties have become unpredictable, they have ballooned in scope. Whereas for the last weeks of pregnancy there may have been hardly enough to do to keep her mind occupied, now suddenly there is too much to be done. Now, the time required for household tasks jumps to the highest it will ever be (save when subsequent infants are equally young).

Figure 20-4 summarizes two studies of succeeding generations of American households. During the intervening years the efficiency of housekeeping improved as mechanization took the place of servants. Nevertheless, in both generations infants doubled the hours required for childless housekeeping. In later years this burden eases off as the youngest child becomes more responsible for his own affairs and spends more time away from home in school and play group. Because of the gradualness of the decline, the exodus of children requires less drastic readjusting than their sudden advent.

Central to the new tasks imposed by children is feeding. [In a study of "patterns of mothering," Brody (1956: 285) found that the way mothers treat their infants in feeding situations provides a better clue to their total pattern of maternal behavior than any other activity.] To be sure, childless wives have themselves and their husbands to feed, but the complexities of feeding infants make adult requirements seem like child's play.

Infant-feeding has involved considerable controversy, faddism, and changing patterns in recent decades. From the Freudian point of view oral gratification is crucial to the child's early adjustment. For this purpose many experts advocate breast-feeding, self-demand scheduling



Adapted from Wilson, 1929: 29; Wiegand, 1954: 18.

**Figure 20-4. Amount of Housework, by Age of Youngest Child, 1929 and 1954**

(or lack of scheduling), and cuddling the baby during feeding. Although there may be values in each of these, Brody (pp. 319-21) finds that going through the motions of any one of them does not automatically provide the child with the intended satisfactions:

Breast-feeding did not insure gentle procedures, intimacy or restfulness. . . . The endorsement of self-demand schedules was poorly related to satisfactory feeding experiences for either mother or infant. . . . Holding an infant did not necessarily enhance his comfort during feeding, and often it meant being held awkwardly or uncomfortably. . . . It appears that a mother may choose to breast feed, may try to give good physical support to her infant and may try to feed on a demand schedule—all . . . important criteria for adequate feeding—and yet she may unknowingly offer little satisfaction to her infant in the process.

The import of Brody's findings is not that methods of infant care do not matter but that the mother's attitudes and feelings toward her child are at least as important as the methods.

In actual practice breast-feeding has declined in popularity despite the enthusiasm of its advocates. During the years child specialists were



crusading for breast-feeding, the proportion of Detroit children ever breast-fed declined from 70 per cent in 1934-43 to 52 per cent in 1944-52. (Detroit Area Study, 1952). Most of these were weaned from breast to bottle. Only one child in twenty was exclusively breast-fed in the latter period.

For some women the ability to feed their children is emotionally satisfying. For others it has no particular appeal or seems disgusting. Some middle-class mothers resent being reduced to the status of a cow. Although bottle-feeding is just as time-consuming, the responsibility may be shared with willing husbands and paid servants. Mothers who find themselves exhausted at 2:00 A.M. or who don't want to have to cart their suckling wherever they go, find bottle-feeding advantageous.

A second controversy has been between rigid scheduling (typically prescribed as every four hours) and feeding whenever the baby is hungry. Schedules once were considered essential for establishing regular body habits. After one research project found that a certain number of hours were ordinarily required for milk to pass through infantile stomachs, the identical schedule was promptly advocated for all babies. Most middle-class mothers followed suit; so did many working-class mothers. A clear majority (57 per cent) of all Detroit mothers fed their infants by the clock during the 1934-1943 period.

For most babies schedules don't work too badly most of the time. The trouble is that sometimes babies wake up ahead of schedule and scream for their milk. If advised by their pediatricians, conscientious mothers may steel themselves against succumbing to their infants' demands—but it is nerve-racking. At other times babies don't wake up when they are supposed to eat—despite poking and pinching by determined parents. For a few babies schedules never fit.

As behavioristic psychology gave way to interest in children's needs and variability, rigid scheduling fell into disrepute. It is now recognized that some infants need to eat oftener than others—and that the mother can best determine this by observation (with clues from the doctor about what to look for). Just as adults occasionally feel hungry earlier or later than usual, it is natural for babies to vary from their usual pattern. Consequently, the rule of thumb changed from "every four hours" to "when he is hungry." For both child and parent the innovation is usually more comfortable. In Detroit the majority switched to self-demand feeding after 1943.

Cynics point out that this means going back to age-old feeding methods used by the human race before clocks and pediatricians were invented. In any case few contemporary parents worry about adjusting their children to a Procrustean feeding schedule. Instead, they use their wits to discern when their babies are ready to eat. Given the opportunity most children work out a rough schedule for themselves. But when ill-

ness, fatigue, or excitement upset this routine, parents must adapt themselves to changing needs.

Perhaps enough has been said to indicate some of the complexities that make infant care so time-consuming. To emphasize long hours and difficulties does not mean that mothers find their labors unrewarded:

Let's be realistic, a baby is a helpless, uncivilized, and demanding creature. He requires a lot of work, acceptance and patience on the part of mom. You're not exactly smiling after you change an active, husky baby's diaper, containing a special present, and he proudly grabs a handful and smears everything within reach. And what about the times when he burps curdled milk? You can brush your dress off, but the sour smell remains. And how long can you tolerate a baby's crying all night when he is teething, knowing there is nothing to stop him? And how much patience do you have or can you develop for the child who is a very slow eater and spits out every other spoonful? Then, what about toilet training the little boy who thinks it much more convenient to wet and then has the exceptional talent of missing the deflector every time? And when you realize you are stuck for twenty-four hours every day, the picture looks pretty hectic. However, it is not all black. A tender smile can be very rewarding as well as the experience of watching a baby develop physically and mentally. Also, there is something about babies which is hard to define but makes them just something wonderful to have around.

*Anxiety about the Child's Welfare.* The heaviest responsibility of parenthood is not the time and money that must be invested but the skill required for knowing what to do and when. Even girls with considerable babysitting experience never have the ultimate responsibility for the survival and welfare of a helpless infant that mothers experience with their first child. By the time later children come along, mothers feel more self-confident, but with the first child anxiety is understandably common.

The problem is intensified by the child's inability to use language. When he cries it could be hunger, wet diapers, diaper rash, too many bedclothes, wanting to be cuddled, or half a dozen other things—things the baby himself might be only vaguely aware of even if he could talk. Worse yet is the panicky fear that he has appendicitis or some other source of sudden death.

One function of the family doctor or pediatrician is to provide support and reassurance to new mothers. A more accessible source of encouragement is Dr. Spock's popular *Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care*:

We know for a fact that the natural loving care that kindly parents give to their children is a hundred times more valuable than their knowing how to pin a diaper on just right, or making a formula expertly. Every time you pick your baby up, even if you do it a little awkwardly at first, every time you change him, bathe him, feed him, smile at him, he's getting a feeling that he belongs to you and you belong to him. Nobody else in the world, no matter how skillful, can give that to him. (1946: 3.)

Yet even the best support from doctor, husband, mother, or married sister only partially allays anxiety. Brody finds new mothers "conspicuously active but also erratic in their attentiveness, efficiency and sensitivity. They quite sedulously governed their infants' actions by stimulating, restricting, or instructing them . . ." (p. 266). Even though ". . . experience itself did not necessarily provide mothers with sensitivity or consistency, experience was likely to increase the assurance, competence, and predictability of maternal behavior" (p. 271). Experienced mothers are not always *better* than inexperienced ones. Sometimes they are simply more blasé and indifferent.

Unfortunately, maternal anxiety tends to be felt by the child, creating a vicious cycle—the mother's tension increases the child's tension, producing symptoms that aggravate the mother's anxiety, and so forth. Mussen and Conger (1956: 341) note that many research projects find that firstborn children have more nervous symptoms than subsequent ones. One of the toughest-to-take of infant symptoms is colic:

Attacks of colic usually begin suddenly with an agonizing, loud and more-or-less continuous cry. . . . The abdomen is distended with legs flexed on the chest. Fists are clenched. The paroxysms end abruptly after minutes or hours, sometimes only to begin again. (Lakin, 1957: 7.)

While colic is not confined to firstborn children, it is definitely associated with maternal anxiety:

Mothers of colicky babies . . . more often cited feelings of nervousness and tension in response to the infant's crying. They expressed greater inadequacy in attempts to interpret the demand or need which was the source of the crying. They also more often complained of feeling ill at ease in handling their babies. (Lakin, p. 29.)

When mothers find themselves in such a quandary, they need external support and guidance. In Lakin's study mothers who had the most trouble with their infants got the least help from their husbands and mothers. Perhaps if they had received more moral support, the vicious cycle could have been broken.

When the first child is essentially normal, the mother's problems are difficult enough. When something is basically wrong, the situation becomes tragic. Once parents have had a normal child, abnormalities are easier to take. But in the first child, they not only produce unrelieved disappointment but also intensify anxieties about future children:

We knew as soon as Mary was born that she wasn't normal physically, but it was only gradually that we realized that she was also mentally retarded. We could not love any baby more than we love her—normal or not. She is ours and when I feed her, stay up with her at night, and hold her tight, I'm sure I feel no different than a parent of any normal child. Yet there is no future in our relationship—she does not know either of us.

When she was seven months old and we were quite sure she was retarded,

we had long visits with my gynecologist. He assured us that Mary's condition is extremely rare and not hereditary and encouraged us to have another child. It was not the easiest pregnancy in the world, however, as I had many fears about the normality of the child I was carrying. I had seen so many abnormalities in Children's Hospital that I never knew existed. Even though I kept myself as busy as possible, it was a tremendous relief when the nine months of waiting were over and we finally had a healthy, normal baby in our house.

Fortunately, gross abnormalities are so rare that the average family need not worry about them in advance. They illustrate, however, the kinds of demands children impose on parents. Those demands not only test the maturity of parents but promote it too. When all is said and done, the advent of children—taxing as it is—is primarily a joyous occasion. After the child-rearing years have passed, couples look back with more nostalgia than relief. So despite the complications the advent of children is welcomed and their departure twenty years later regretted.

# *Parental Roles in Socializing Children*

The child-rearing responsibility of parents is so many-faceted that this chapter and the next can hardly do it justice. On the other hand, there is some virtue in the simplicity so great a condensation requires.

This chapter focuses on socialization, the next on education. The distinction is a fine one and an arbitrary one, for the terms are often used interchangeably. The distinction I wish to make is between teaching self-control and teaching all other skills and knowledges. Self-control has a negative emphasis—keeping oneself from antisocial behavior. The remaining goals of child-rearing are largely positive—skills and knowledges that enrich the life of the individual and society. Many basic principles of learning and teaching underlie both socialization and education. Nevertheless, the practical implications are sufficiently different to make separate discussion useful.

## *The Importance of Socialization*

Children are born with abundant potentialities but begin their lives as hardly more than little animals. A newborn child has previously known no distinction between himself and his warm, nourishing environment. Despite the physical trauma of birth, he still considers himself the center of the universe, the beneficiary of its services. He is not aware that other people have separate existences. Only gradually and painfully

does the "Copernican revolution" dawn. First he discovers that his mother is not part of himself, then that his father is distinguishable from his mother. Later he realizes they have other roles besides mothering and fathering him, and needs of their own that compete with his. Finally, he learns that his role in life is not simply to receive but to give, and that he must temper his own impulses in order to meet the needs of others. Only then is he fully human, no longer just an animal.

This humanization process is socially significant because the child graduates from the family ready to take a responsible role in the world. Society does not have to defend itself from his aggressive, exploitive impulses and can depend on him to control himself in accord with social norms and expectations. The fabric of society would soon crumble were its new recruits unsuccessfully socialized in more than a few exceptional cases. The machinery of justice can cope with a few delinquents and a few criminals, but society depends heavily on the self-operating inner controls of the vast majority.

To the family the stress of coping with "nature in the raw" comes early. Long before society has to put up with what the family produces, parents must live with what nature brings them. No matter how great their generosity, their tolerance, or even their masochistic urge to martyr themselves, parents inevitably must curb their "little monster" if he is not to destroy their domestic tranquility. Every child is a potential "Dennis-the-menace." And while socialization sometimes occurs so swiftly that the threat is never apparent, its success is just as crucial to the welfare of the family as of society.

To the child, himself, being allowed to run wild seems delightful at first. But wild men inevitably end up in cages—either prisons or mental hospitals. The fact that society cannot tolerate unsocialized adults means that children who fail to learn conformity to social norms face a tragic future. For the child perhaps most pointedly, socialization is indispensable.

## The Provision of Love

Paradoxically, socialization begins with gratification of the infant's needs. Later he must learn to limit his demands, but that comes after he becomes dependent on his parents. Dependency is created by the parents' provision of food, clothing, shelter, warmth, and affection.

By and large, the standardized nuclear American family effectively creates dependency. Whenever a child depends consistently on a single source of gratification—his mother—a strong bond develops between them. In primitive societies with more complex family systems, a given child may be cared for by many women—aunts, grandmother, and older

sisters as well as mother. In some such societies he indiscriminately calls them all "mother." And so his dependency is correspondingly diffuse.

Relatively few American infants are subjected to such multiple mothering. Those who grow up in large families may be, especially if they are the younger siblings. Those whose mothers work and leave them to various baby sitters may be too.

By and large, however, in the crucial years of infancy American children have only one mother to depend on, so they cling to her with a vengeance. As they grow older, they depend on their fathers somewhat too. But the heavy concentration of parent-child contact on the mother means that our discussion can be simplified by disregarding the father for the moment.

The relationship thus established is certainly "primary" in nature. It differs, however, from the normal criteria for personal relationships since it is one-sided. The child at first is all take, the mother all give. The child is pure parasite, using the mother as means to the end of his own gratification.

Creating a purely selfish relationship in infancy seems like a back-handed way to socialize a child. Nevertheless, research and psychological theory suggest that extensive gratification in infancy prepares for socialization in two ways: it provides the child with a sense of emotional security; it provides the mother with a leverage that enables her to make him into whatever she wants.

The value of a sense of security is self-evident. The idea of leverage, however, deserves expansion. Insofar as a mother is a source of need-gratification, she acquires by conditioning a secondary reward value. Having learned that she is the source of so many good things, the child is gladdened by the very sight of her. Just as Pavlov's dog learned to salivate when a bell rang, the child learns to smile when his mother approaches. He wants to please her, not only to keep from alienating the source of all good things (that is, to keep from "killing the goose that lays the golden eggs"), but positively in order to reward the person who means so much to him.

Once the child reaches this point, he is ready to be influenced even at the expense of needs that originally created the relationship. Once his attachment to his mother *for herself* becomes strong enough, she can frustrate his needs and he will sacrifice them for her sake. To be sure, this transition does not occur without conflict and trouble. Nevertheless, provided the parent-child relationship is close, the transition can be gradually accomplished.

Later we will examine the disciplinary process by which this transition is brought about. First, however, we will examine the evidence for the importance of dependency as the first step in socialization. Criteria for successful socialization include absence of antisocial behavior (such as

delinquency) and evidence that the reason for that absence is not simply fear of punishment but learned belief in the value of social norms. Three major research projects deal with each criterion. Bandura and Walters (1959) and Glueck and Glueck (1950) compare adolescent boys whose behavior is respectively aggressive versus nonaggressive and delinquent versus nondelinquent. Sears, Maccoby, and Levin (1957) compare five-year-old children with high and low consciences. From the standpoint of the theory we have presented, dependency and the conditions that promote it should be concentrated among nonaggressive, nondelinquent boys and high-conscience children.

**Table 21-1—Conscience Development in Relation to the Child's Dependency and the Mother's Acceptance**

<i>Mother's Acceptance of the Child</i>	PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN RATED AS HAVING HIGH CONSCIENCE	
	<i>Less Dependent Children</i>	<i>More Dependent Children</i>
Rejecting	13% (47)	23% (53)
Accepting	29% (118)	35% (101)

Adapted from Sears, 1957: 383. Reciprocal percentages of each cell have low conscience—e.g., 87% of the 47 less dependent, rejected children. Figures in parentheses are the number of cases on which each percentage is based.

For five-year-olds of both sexes conscience development is more successful among dependent children (see Table 21-1). Moreover, conscience is accentuated when the dependent behavior of the child results from warm, accepting behavior by the mother (Sears, p. 383). Sometimes children of this age are clinging and overdependent in a desperate attempt to hold onto mothers who basically reject them. Under these circumstances conscience development is impeded. Only when dependency springs naturally from a positive mother-child relationship does conscience develop most successfully.

In Table 21-1, these processes apply primarily to boys. For little girls conscience development is smoother. Their tie to their mothers is more often accepted by the mother and respected by the father, leaving little to interfere with the socialization process.

For boys, on the other hand, depending on the mother or even on the father may be rebuffed by the parents as sissified. Especially fathers unsure of their own masculinity rush their sons into independence too soon and punish them for childish dependence. Under these circumstances boys develop dependency-anxiety; that is, they fear depending on anyone because of the punishment it brought in the past. Since their dependency needs are throttled, they fail to follow the parents' example and teaching. Though the parents hardly intended it, frustrating the natural dependency wishes of their children alienates them and leaves them at the mercy of delinquent impulses.



For Bandura and Walters' teenage boys the pattern is clear-cut (pp. 49-86). The aggressive boys were punished so often for seeking help from their parents that they came to resist both their help and their companionship. Normal boys, by contrast, seek help, companionship, and praise from their parents, teachers, and peers, showing that they are not afraid to establish close personal relationships.

These dependency relationships had their origin in childhood when the normal boys' mothers and especially their fathers were warmer in their relationships. The fathers also spent more time in affectional interaction with the normal boys. On the other hand, boys who later became aggressive felt rejected by both their fathers and their mothers. To be sure, once a boy becomes aggressive, a vicious cycle of aggression and rejection is set in motion. However, the researchers conclude that ". . . the parents' retrospective accounts of their handling of their sons in early childhood and their descriptions of early parent-child relationships gave considerable support to the hypothesis that parental rejection and lack of nurturance are determinants of aggression" (p. 69).

**Table 21-2—Delinquency Rate, by Parental Love and Discipline**

Percentage Delinquent, by Parental Relationship to Son*	Father	Mother
<b>Affection</b>		
Warm	34%	43%
Indifferent	73	86
Hostile	84	87
<b>Supervision</b>		
Suitable	—	10
Fair	—	57
Unsuitable	—	83
<b>Discipline</b>		
Firm but kindly	9	6
Erratic	70	62
Lax	60	83
Overstrict	75	73

\* Reciprocal percentages are nondelinquent.

Adapted from Glueck and Glueck, 1950: 113-31. Source: 500 matched pairs of delinquent and non-delinquent boys, ages eleven to sixteen, Boston area, 1940. For the total group of 1,000 boys, the delinquency rate is *ipso facto* 50% (much higher than the community-wide rate).

Table 21-2 shows a similar pattern when the criterion for failure in socialization is teenage delinquency. Dependency-producing warmth is provided by successful parents, especially fathers. From mothers the classic danger is not too little warmth but too little discipline. Many mothers of delinquent boys are warm enough but overprotective to the point of laxity.

Though the importance of warmth and affection seems clear from these research projects, experts once thought otherwise. From the early days of behavioristic psychology, John B. Watson concluded that the

quickest way to produce socialized adults is to treat children like little adults. In a widely read book published in 1928, this child psychologist advocated less warmth and affection:

There is a sensible way of treating children. Treat them as though they were young adults. Dress them, bathe them with care and circumspection. Let your behavior always be objective and kindly firm. Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit in your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say goodnight. Shake hands with them in the morning. Give them a pat on the head if they have made an extraordinarily good job of a difficult task. Try it out. In a week's time, you will find how easy it is to be perfectly objective with your child and at the same time kindly. You will be ashamed of the mawkish, sentimental way you have been handling it (pp. 81-82).

Watson's appeal influenced a whole generation of mothers. Fifteen years later the pendulum reached the other extreme as Margaret Ribble urged "The Rights of Infants" to receive plenty of "mothering"; that is, just the kind of affectionate nurturing Watson had deplored (Ribble, 1943).

Today we know that successful socialization is more complex than either Watson or Ribble believed. Love is indeed the beginning, but not the ending. Love is indispensable. But, as Bettelheim says, "Love is not enough." Besides love there must be discipline.

## The Imposition of Discipline

If parents always gratified a child, he would grow up a parasite. If he were always given free rein to do whatever he wished, he would remain as much an animal as ever. For him to be socialized, restraints must be imposed on his behavior. The bad must be pruned out and the good encouraged. In short, he must be taught to be a human being.

Teaching requires disciplinary intervention. Rather than being allowed to grow up "naturally," the child must be trained to grow up socially.

The word "discipline" is often used interchangeably with "punishment," but that is a corruption of the root meaning of *instruction*. The latter sense is intended here. Imposing discipline involves setting standards, interpreting values, and rewarding conformity. The goal of each is to produce an individual capable of self-control through conscience and reason.

### SETTING STANDARDS

To learn to conform to the norms of society, a child must know what those norms are. The parents' first task is to inform him of those norms.

This is done in several ways. The parents provide living demonstrations of adult behavior, models the child observes in action day after day. Secondly, parents verbally instruct the child, preaching little sermons about what behavior is expected. Lastly, parents intervene actively in the child's life to point out forcefully which acts are desirable and which are undesirable.

The criteria for effective standard-setting are clarity and appropriateness.

*Clarity.* If a norm is to be influential, it must be clearly understood. The chief means of attaining clarity is by consistency. If the same norm is consistently presented over a long period of time and by not only the parents but also by other significant people in the child's environment, the lesson will be crystal clear. Conversely, the norm becomes fuzzy, blurred, ambiguous if a parent is not consistent with himself, but says one thing and does another or wobbles in his behavior from time to time. Confusion arises if the two parents advocate contradictory norms, one strict, the other permissive or vacillating. Worse yet, if the two parents are not consistently at home, the framework of standards within which the child lives fluctuates with their comings and goings:

While my father was gone, my mother had to rely on herself and she was always afraid she was making mistakes. She'd be very permissive for a time and then suddenly become very restrictive. Because we didn't know exactly what was expected, we became more unruly. We beat up the house and each other but couldn't look to mother for justice. We could persuade her into most anything relatively easily. Whoever could talk fastest and most convincingly won out. When my father was home, our family was in a confused permissive-authoritarian atmosphere. We knew he demanded obedience, so on the rare occasions he told us to do something, we were afraid to talk back. But mother usually let us do as we pleased, although on certain occasions she also was irrationally firm.

Peck (1958) finds that consistent parental control produces a stronger ego (emotional maturity), a stronger conscience, and willingness to conform to social norms. Bandura and Walters (p. 205) find the mothers of aggressive boys inconsistent in the obedience expected from their sons:

The mothers of the aggressive boys made fewer demands for obedience and were more inclined to overlook non-compliance. Consequently, their sons had become inclined to ignore their mothers and to obey only at times when extra pressure had been brought to bear. The mothers' mounting anger usually served as the cue that they expected compliance and that they would brook no further delay.

Consistency here involves not *what* standard of behavior is advocated but *whether* the standard is to be taken seriously. Clarity requires consistency in both senses: a single standard and certainty that the parents

mean what they say (that is, take the standard seriously and expect the child to do likewise).

Consistent support from others in the environment helps parents socialize their children (Zimmerman and Cervantes, 1960). Surrounding children with relatives and friends who share the same social norms reinforces those norms. Conversely, conflicting neighborhoods and social circles undermine the parents' norms through cross-pressures from different directions. The child in such circumstances becomes what sociologists call a "marginal man," not sure where he belongs or what is expected of him.

*Feasibility.* The goal of socialization is to produce a mature adult. This can't be done overnight. Expecting too much is just as fatal as expecting too little. When standards are too low, the child is not encouraged to progress. When they are too high, he becomes discouraged because he cannot attain them. Standards therefore should be tailored to the child's age and readiness to learn.

This is more easily stated in principle than applied in practice. It requires constantly revising expectations upward as the child grows older. As he attains each goal, a higher one must be set. Moreover, what is appropriate for one child may not fit a sibling of the opposite sex or of different mental ability or temperament. Appropriate standards stimulate each child to move ahead within the limits of his own abilities.

### REASONING

There are two possible ways of imposing standards: authoritatively or with reasons.

A child quite naturally responds to new norms with the question "Why?" Why must he abandon his childish ways? Why must he curb his own impulses? Why must he master new modes of behavior?

The easy answer for the parent is "Because I said so." It is short and swift. It requires no thinking. And it allows no room for argument.

Yet research proves that taking the trouble to reason with the child pays off in the long run. Bandura and Walters' socialized teenagers were reasoned with significantly more than the aggressive boys (p. 230). Reasoning promoted conscience development among both their teenagers and Sears' kindergarten-age children (p. 386).

How does this happen? Why does giving reasons for demands make them more palatable?

Invoking authority creates a contest of wills, a power struggle between parent and child. At first the contest is uneven. A young child is pretty much at the mercy of his parents. Nevertheless, he instinctively rebels, and the older he gets the more successful the rebellion. By the

time adolescence is reached, rebels may do the opposite of what their parents demand, just because they demand it.

Parental authority doesn't "take" partly because it creates resistance but also because it is external. Its success depends on the parents' say-so. When they are not around, the child has no basis for controlling his own behavior.

In other words, parents are not portable. But portable standards are precisely what every child needs. If he is to function independently in adult society, he must be able to control his own behavior. Nothing external can do that for him. He needs something internal.

*Internalization.* The development of one's own set of standards does not depend exclusively on reasoning. Partly it is the product of the rewarding and punishing to be discussed in the next section. But reasoning helps.

Reasoning takes the emphasis off parental coercion and puts it on the intrinsic characteristics of the social situation. Reasoning teaches the circumstances in which particular actions are appropriate or inappropriate. Reasoning shifts the child's attention to the thoughts and feelings of those around him. It develops empathy, sensitivity, awareness of the needs of others. Reasoning helps him understand how he would feel if he were in their shoes.

When parents take the trouble to discuss issues, the child realizes that demands are not being imposed as punishment or because the parents are mean. He notices his parents' concern for his welfare and recognizes that his long-term welfare requires modifying his behavior. Given a legitimate answer to his "Why?" he senses that his parents respect him as a person; so their ideas deserve respectful consideration in return. By contrast, how likely is a child to respond positively when parental authority is extended beyond the bounds of truth?

CHILD: Mother, why can't I go out and play?

MOTHER: It's raining, dear, and I don't want you to catch cold.

CHILD (*looks out the window*): But it *isn't* raining, Mummy. It just stopped.

FATHER (*overhearing interchange*): Young lady, if your mother says it's raining, it's raining. (Sears, p. 353.)

For socialization to be successful, standards set by parents must be adopted by the child as his own. This is what internalization means. It means that the child does not behave because his parents tell him to or because he thinks they will punish him if he doesn't or reward him if he does. Socialization is not complete until he behaves because *he* feels it is the right thing to do. Given good reasons, he will feel that way sooner.

Reasoning involves the interpretation of values. It shows the child the values to be gained by adhering to norms. It helps him develop values of his own that are not the egocentric ones he began life with. As values

are interpreted, they make more sense and eventually are adopted by the child as his own philosophy of life, the moral code by which he governs his behavior.

#### REWARDING CONFORMITY

Learning theory suggests that new responses must be rewarded if they are to be reinforced, that is, if the tendency to repeat desired behavior is to be strengthened. Some rewards for adhering to norms come automatically. When a child imitates his parents' behavior, he feels grown-up, "like Daddy or Mommy." When he responds to requests from them, he can anticipate their pleasure, and this too makes him feel good. When he responds to reasoning, he has already been rewarded by their attention as they discussed the problem with him.

Nevertheless, how parents respond to the child's adherence to or rejection of their standards is vitally important to speed of socialization. If they pay no attention to how he behaves, his incentive to learn is weakened. If they treat him the same no matter whether he tries or not, why try? It is not enough for parents to set standards and give reasons. They must find out whether the child performs as requested or not, and their subsequent behavior toward him must be contingent on how well he does. The more accurately their response accords with his performance, the more rapidly he will learn.

*Supervision and Trust.* The first step in the process is becoming informed about the child's performance. If he was supposed to make his bed, mother must take the trouble to go to the bedroom and inspect it, or else she must be sure he reports back when he has finished. One way or another, she must learn whether he does it or not. Table 21-2 showed that the better the mother's supervision, the more successful the socialization (that is, the lower the delinquency rate).

This is a delicate matter. Supervision can backfire. Checking up too much gives the impression that the parents don't really expect the child to perform his task. By contrast parental trust and faith create an expectation the child tends to live up to. Not wanting to let his parents down or betray their confidence in him is a powerful incentive to good behavior. (Peck finds mutual trust and approval between parents and children even more closely related to socially conforming behavior than parental consistency.)

My parents let me believe that I was doing something because I wanted to, not because I had to. I was never allowed to stay out exceptionally late at night. I had to be in at a certain time, but I hated to have my parents tell me when I had to be in, each time that I went out. At first, they did. But soon they did not say anything more about what time I should be in when I left to go someplace. I knew what time I should be home, according to where I was going (which they always knew), and I was home on time. If I hadn't they

would have immediately stepped in. In other words, I still came home at the appropriate hour (which wasn't always the time I would have chosen), but I felt more like an adult because they had not told me.

Supervision is important, but it must be carried out in such a way that it doesn't undermine the child's sense that the parent expects him to succeed.

Once the necessary information about the child's performance has been gathered, the question of applying sanctions arises.

*Reward vs. Punishment.* If the child does well, rewarding him is clearly in order. Rewards increase his sense of accomplishment, compensate him for his trouble, and increase the positive connotations of the act so that he will be more likely to repeat it in the future.

If he has failed to undertake the required task or has performed it poorly, the reward should be correspondingly less. The parents' job is to react differentially according to the child's performance, to gauge the reward to the accomplishment. If he behaves poorly, he should be rewarded less—provided, of course, that the cause was lack of effort on his part. Where performance is poor despite earnest effort, parents may be expecting too much, and may need to train him in how to proceed. In other words, the standard may be either too high or not clear enough for the child.

If the problem is not in the standard but in the child, if his failure stems from laziness or willful disobedience, if he is deliberately bad, then is nonreward strong enough, or should he be punished? The answer is "no," at least as a general practice. Sears (p. 386) finds that conscience develops slowest when punishments such as spanking and deprivation of privileges are used most often. Bandura and Walters' aggressive boys, similarly, come from families using punishments of all sorts, but which especially often take away privileges, punish physically (in early childhood), and nag, scold, and ridicule (pp. 221, 241).

In general, punishment makes matters worse rather than better. Why? It impairs the dependency relationship. It impairs the child's conception of himself. It sets a bad example for the child. It fails to teach good behavior.

Punishment hurts the child (either physically or psychologically) and creates resentment against the parent. This resentment interferes with the relationship of mutual confidence and trust essential to socialization.

It undermines the child's self-confidence, lowering his ego strength so that he feels discouraged and hopeless. At worst, he comes to think of himself as a bad boy, unable to do right, expected to misbehave—by himself, his parents, and everyone else.

Punishment is perceived by the child as a form of aggression. This is especially true of physical punishment. When parents use their hands in dealing with a child, he in turn will use his fists in problem situations.

When punishment is severe, the child responds with counteraggression directed against the parent or displaced onto other objects (Sears, p. 262).

Sears concludes that from the standpoint of learning theory, punishment is a poor way to teach desired behavior. He recognizes that in certain circumstances, punishment (or the threat of it) is the quickest way to halt undesired behavior. But "action control" is not the same as motivating good behavior in the future:

The permanent elimination of changeworthy behavior, and its replacement by more desirable and mature forms, i.e., the control of learning, offers a different problem. To effect elimination of a response requires that it no longer be rewarded, i.e., that it not be followed by a satisfying state of affairs. The strengthening of desirable behavior can occur only when a satisfying state of affairs does follow. It has been found that the introduction of punishment into the *learning* process (as distinct from action control) creates some difficulty, for punishment *after* an undesirable performance breaks up the child's activity but does not give direction toward any specific new behavior, and may produce an emotional state that interferes with the learning of the desired substitute behavior. Usually, punishment provides a fairly inefficient means of non-rewarding the changeworthy actions, and offers a strong sanction that tends to impel some new (but not specified) kind of action, perhaps mainly an avoidance of the punisher. (Sears, p. 318.)

*Physical vs. Verbal Sanctions.* Both rewards and punishments may be subdivided into physical and nonphysical categories. Physical rewards include pay and gifts. The commonest physical punishment is spanking. Praise is a verbal reward, ridicule a verbal punishment.

Earlier we saw that reasoning aids socialization by facilitating the internalization of standards. The same principle applies here. Verbal sanctions promote socialization more than physical sanctions since the latter are external.

Figure 21-1 is not a statistical table but a diagram of the theoretical relationships between the two variables we have been discussing: rewards *vs.* punishments and physical *vs.* verbal sanctions. It suggests that verbal rewards are usually the most effective and physical punishments the least effective (or perhaps even the most negative) sanctions. The remaining categories are intermediate in effectiveness.

#### CONSCIENCE—THE GOAL OF DISCIPLINE

The goal of discipline is not conforming to norms in order to be rewarded by the parents but internalizing them so that they become self-operative. Internalized norms compose the conscience, or superego. The chief psychological mechanisms through which they operate are anxiety and guilt.

*Anxiety.* After a child has internalized a parent-imposed norm (for



	PUNISHMENTS —	REWARDS +
VERBAL +	Withdrawal of love Criticism Ridicule Nagging, scolding  + —	Praise Affection  ++
PHYSICAL —	Spanking Fines Deprivation of privileges  --	Pay Gifts Bribes Special privileges  - +

Figure 21-1. Socialization Effectiveness of Various Methods of Discipline

example, against stealing), his anxiety is aroused whenever he is tempted. Unconsciously, he feels a negative emotional reaction which is the legacy of previous experiences of parental disappointment when he misbehaved. He no longer thinks consciously of his parents but only of the wrongness of stealing in itself. As a result, his temptation is overruled and the act inhibited.

The function of anxiety is to prevent individuals from engaging in antisocial behavior. Insofar as it accomplishes this purpose, anxiety is a useful facet of the socialized personality. Lack of enough anxiety to inhibit their delinquent behavior is one deficiency with Bandura and Walters' aggressive boys. They particularly lack anxiety in the sexual area where their attitudes are blasé (p. 178).

For a few neurotic people, anxiety is excessive, restraining them not only from antisocial behavior but also from ordinary social interaction. It is possible to "oversocialize" a child, especially when parents fail to use enough reasoning to give the child a clear understanding of the difference between tabooed and proper behavior. However, the chief danger in contemporary America is too little anxiety rather than too much. For every overanxious child there are dozens of underanxious ones.

*Guilt.* Closely related to anxiety is guilt. If conscience is not strong enough to prevent antisocial behavior in the first place, it may still create guilt feelings afterward. The value of such feelings is twofold: (1) they make the individual less likely to repeat the behavior; (2) they encourage him to try to undo his "crime." Guilt feelings are a form of self-punishment following deviant behavior which makes the behavior less rewarding and less likely to recur. If anything can be done to make

restitution for the delinquent act, a guilt-ridden individual will attempt to do so even though no one else knows what he has done. In some cases no restitution is possible, but a guilty individual can undo a theft by returning the stolen object.

Poorly socialized children, accordingly, feel less guilty than well-socialized ones, even though the former's crimes are far grosser than the latter's. Bandura and Walters' well-socialized teenagers felt guilty and ashamed in the few instances when they were aggressive toward parents, peers, or teachers or committed minor delinquencies. On the other hand, the aggressive group felt little guilt after more flagrant misdemeanors (p. 287).

Guilt, like anxiety, causes difficulty when it becomes exaggerated out of all connection with reality. In some mentally disturbed persons, the aim of psychotherapy is to reduce the level of anxiety and guilt. However, where parents fail to inculcate a strong enough conscience to produce enough anxiety and guilt, psychotherapy can accomplish relatively little. Appropriate amounts of guilt and anxiety are visible signs of the development of conscience.

#### BEHAVIOR CONTROL—PENDING THE GROWTH OF CONSCIENCE

"What to do until the conscience comes" is one of the problems faced by those who try to salvage conscience-less children (paraphrasing Redl and Wineman, 1951: 326). The same problem faces parents when children are young. In some respects the latter problem is worse because a toddler has not only no conscience but also no speech. Hence verbal methods of reasoning and praise are worthless at first.

With an infant there is no problem, because he can't get into trouble. Once he begins to crawl, however, and especially after he learns to walk, he can create serious trouble for himself and others. How can he be handled during the intervening period between walking and talking? Three methods of behavior control are particularly useful for such youngsters: distraction, isolation, and spanking.

*Distraction.* A child doesn't learn a thing when he is successfully distracted. He simply turns from one activity to another. If the distraction was skillful, he may not even be aware that there was anything wrong with his earlier behavior.

For a very young child, incapable of understanding or learning much of anything, distraction is the easiest way of getting him to shift from undesirable to desirable behavior. The only danger is that the latter may reward the former so that he learns to repeat precisely what he wasn't supposed to do!

After language is acquired, distraction becomes obsolete. Henceforth, parent and child should confront issues head-on, rather than by-pass them

by distraction. It is therefore a temporary measure with little usefulness beyond the first few years.

*Isolation.* Sending Johnny to his room may have either a punitive or therapeutic intent—with correspondingly different effects. When isolation serves as punishment, it comes close to rejection. The child feels that he has lost his parents' love and been temporarily thrown out of the family circle. His natural response is to kick and scream, or weep and mope around. The symptoms differ by age, sex, and temperament, but they all mean loneliness and hurt. His objection to confinement testifies to his need to reestablish contact with the family. Often his desperation increases his parents' determination to isolate him—and a vicious circle is set up.

But some children need isolation at certain times. Those who are nervous and high-strung get overstimulated in group situations. They talk progressively louder and act more and more wildly until they lose control of themselves. When a child gets "high" this way, removal from the group provides a chance for calming down.

If parents recognize what is happening, they may be able to intervene before losing their temper. Firmly but calmly they can do what the situation demands. Unruffled themselves, they may be able to get across to the child something of their own feeling: "This is not punishment but a good move—an opportunity for you to recover your equilibrium." Communication is enhanced by going with him, explaining briefly what is being done and why. Brevity reduces the chances of making matters worse by slipping into an argument. Though he may not be ready immediately to switch to quieter activities, interesting playthings may sooner or later distract him from thinking about the group he has left. In such ways the point may be made that the isolation = rejection equation does not apply to this case.

In families who use isolation therapeutically, children sometimes learn to appreciate their own need for cooling-off periods. As they grow older, they learn to recognize their own oversensitivity and voluntarily retreat to the safety of solitude when groups threaten their equanimity. Regardless of whether individuals ever achieve self-guidance, the family, the play group, and the volatile child himself benefit from skillfully used isolation.

*Spanking.* While distraction and isolation may be useful solutions to behavior problems that have already arisen, some problem situations are so dangerous that they must be prevented in advance (or when they almost happen, prevented from ever happening again). Physical safety is the main problem here—how to keep children away from hazards of fire, water, falls, and moving automobiles. By and large, parents rely on environmental controls for this purpose (Sears, p. 275). They put up

fences, lock doors, hide matches and poisons. They supplement preventive measures with eternal vigilance, since the most innocent-appearing situations are exploited by youthful ingenuity in unexpected ways. Some hazards, however, cannot be removed. Hot stoves are the traditional example. To teach a preverbal child to avoid such hazards, spanking has dramatic value. As with distraction, however, spanking obsolesces with the advent of speech.

## Father Role and Mother Role

Two parents are better than one, and the fact that parents come in two sexes makes their duality even more valuable. Nevertheless, more fundamental than the differences are the similarities in the child-rearing tasks of fathers and mothers.

### SIMILARITY

The two main socialization tasks for parents are providing love and imposing discipline. Historically these tasks were assigned to different parents—love to the mother and discipline to the father.

Recent research by Ronald Lippitt and his associates at the University of Michigan suggests that such differentiation reduces the influence of parents over children. The discipline of the father becomes coercive and the mother's love seductive. Only when discipline comes from a loving parent can it be accepted and internalized by the child. Only when a parent's love is concerned with the child's progress toward maturity does it avoid infantilizing him.

Hence, fathers and mothers ideally play similar roles, uniting love and discipline. One parent may spend more time with the children, but the quality of the relationship cannot differ greatly if child-rearing is to be most effective.

### DIFFERENTIATION

The chief difference between fathers and mothers is in the amount of time devoted to child-rearing. Mothers who are home full time have far more contact with children than husbands can.

*Mother Role.* Most mothers have no desire to work during the child-rearing years. Though they would like to get out occasionally, even half-time work would be too much. That can wait until the children are at least in school. Meanwhile, motherhood is a career in itself.

What does it mean to make a career of mothering? For one thing it

means taking time to play with the child. At first he appreciates nothing more complex than being cuddled, rocked, sung to, and talked to. Not that he understands the monologue, but out of such attention grow feelings of warmth and acceptance. Later on he wants stories read to him, games played with him, and chances to "help" with the housework.

Career-mothers take advantage of opportunities to increase their knowledge about children. They read *Parents' Magazine*, go to child-study clubs, and hear lectures by child psychologists.

How much does one have to know to be a good mother? Strictly speaking, not much. Some women with little "book-learning" but deep emotional resources do a superb job. Nevertheless, knowledge can pave the way to understanding—particularly to understanding unusual situations. Child psychology doesn't have all the answers yet, but it has a lot to offer.

Career-mothers enter into community activities to provide better facilities and programs for children. By organizing cooperative nursery schools, teaching Sunday School, and helping with the PTA, they help their own children and others' too.

Finally, career-mothers know when to turn elsewhere for help. When a child needs special help with his mental or emotional development, they take advantage of professional resources. The spread of child guidance clinics makes such resources increasingly available. Moreover, career-mothers use such community facilities not only to help their children but also to improve their own functioning.

A word of warning is in order to career-mothers. Any career can become too absorbing at the expense of other interests, jeopardizing the balanced life on which mental health depends. Especially motherhood. Other careers have the safety valve of time at home, away from the job. Even doctors who spend their evenings reading medical journals change the setting from office to home. For mothers home is where the job is. When the children go to bed, there are still dishes to be done and the inevitable piles of mending and pressing.

Some mothers can relax and forget the pressure of work only by escaping from the house. Others can more philosophically let the housework slide for a few hours while they relax with husband, music, or reading. Some sort of relief is indispensable for maintaining perspective and resiliency.

Taking motherhood too seriously hurts both mother and child. From this source comes "smother love" corroding children's spontaneity and initiative. Wise mothers know when it is advisable to stop mothering and let children roam on their own. Remembering their other roles as wives and as individuals is perhaps the easiest way to rediscover perspective.

The problem is reversed for mothers who work outside the house

while their children are still young. Barring financial extremity, such work is usually attempted only by those who dislike housework:

I had a good job before I got married, and the company was good enough to give me a maternity leave. Three months after the baby was born, I went back to the office. My days are busy ones, it is true, and I am often tired. But at least the fatigue comes from accomplishing something instead of the dull tiredness of the woman who has her child under foot all day. When I come home I feel glad to see my child and he is to see me. Yet because he is used to my working, he never raises a fuss when I leave. I firmly believe that doing what makes me most contented can only bring greater happiness and security to my family.

For working mothers, the problem is finding enough time to spend with their children. Aware of the problem, they may make a deliberate effort to give their children concentrated attention. Especially mothers who work because they enjoy it are apt to feel guilty about neglecting their children and over-indulge them when they are home (Hoffman, 1961). Though maternal employment is increasing in the United States, the roles of mother and employee are not easily integrated.

*Father Role.* That fathering is a part-time role is taken for granted. Most fathers come to their tasks unprepared. Confronted with their first child, they feel all thumbs.

The art of pinning on diapers, supporting a baby's neck, "burping" him after his bottle—all these have to be learned. But they are lessons rewarded by the responsiveness of the child and the appreciation of the wife. Many husbands spend as much time as their wives actually doing things with their children (since wives are preoccupied with housekeeping responsibilities). Reuben Hill describes children as "mother deaf"—they hear her preach so much that they ignore what she says. The father's unique contribution to family living is his freshness. This gives his words special authority. It makes him a good mediator in mother-child conflicts. Children feel able to confide in him, and he in turn can interpret his wife's needs to the younger generation.

For such reasons fathers play crucial parts in children's socialization. For example, Peterson (1961) finds maladjustment among kindergarten children caused at least as much by the father's treatment as by the mother's. In his study inadequate fathers were either weak and ineffectual or cold and excessively strict. The fact that they are home only part of the time does not mean their role is unimportant.

For boys in particular, fathers are indispensable. Growing up to be a man (that is, to assume the masculine sex role) requires a masculine model with which to identify (and vice versa for girls). Children need warm, effective parents of their own sex to emulate. Those who lose their sex-role model through death, divorce, or long-term separation are handi-

capped. Hence, for families blessed with both sons and daughters, parents of both sexes are much to be preferred.

### COLLABORATION

Dual parents are advantageous not only to children but also to the parents themselves, as those who bear the burden alone know all too well. A second parent provides support, consultation, and relief for the first.

*Support.* The confusion for children when parents hold different standards has already been mentioned. From this standpoint being the only parent is better than having to fight the spouse over disciplinary methods and standards. Battles are common because the issues children raise are so numerous. Indeed in the preadolescent and adolescent years they even outstrip money as the chief source of marital disagreement (see Fig. 14-1).

When parents speak with a single voice, two parents are better than one. When only one takes a stand, a child can dismiss it as a parental quirk. When both parents say the same thing, the message is more impressive. In this sense support from the spouse strengthens each parent's position.

*Consultation.* Parents don't always know what stand to take. When situations are new, complex, and baffling, consultation with the partner is a welcome resource. To be able to talk the situation over with someone who knows the circumstances equally well provides an accessible opportunity for gaining perspective on the problem.

*Relief.* For mothers saddled with children all day, perhaps the greatest value of the partner is for relief. When the husband comes home, she has "held the fort" all day. [5:00 P.M. is characteristically the mother's most fatiguing time of day (Wiegand and Gross, 1958).] Just when fathers arrive, mothers have to prepare dinner. To be sure, fathers can be tired too, but the change of scene can make the children seem a relief instead of more work.

I used to think we had a regular jinx in our house the way Jan always burned the steak the few times we could afford it. I certainly criticized her pretty ruthlessly for her carelessness. Recently though, I've realized she gets distracted by the children while she's doing the cooking. They get pretty fidgety at that time of day. So the next time I bring some expensive meat home I'll see whether taking over the kids myself solves the problem.

Though most commonly from mother to father at 5:00 P.M., at other times or in the opposite direction, parents come to each other's rescue when energy ebbs and patience wears thin. Since children have more energy than adults, it takes two parents to keep up with them. Being a good parent means being sensitive not only to the child's needs

but also to the partner's, and coming to the latter's rescue at critical moments. Especially when one parent is having difficulty imposing discipline on a recalcitrant child, the other can make a fresh approach with greater effectiveness.

#### LIVING WITH CHILDREN

Important as discipline is in handling critical situations, it would be a mistake to think of it as the only or even the chief way in which parents guide their children's growth. After all, the time devoted to disciplining children is a small fraction of the total week. More often parents and children interact spontaneously with no thought of methods or goals in personality growth. Most of the time children simply live at home as members of a family, inevitably but unconsciously influenced by the behavior of father and mother.

The parents' example of human behavior and participation in activities with the child are far more influential than their occasional disciplinary intervention. As long as the underlying tone of the parent-child relationship is positive, he automatically absorbs their way of living, their values, and their philosophy of life.

The largely automatic nature of this process of osmosis reduces the pressure on the parents' shoulders. It means they don't have to consciously shape their children's destiny all the time. They can have faith in the future. If parents are emotionally mature, their children will grow to maturity too, through the guidance that human beings living together naturally give each other.



# *Parental Roles in Educating Children*

As civilization becomes more complex, the task of parents enlarges too. No longer can they be satisfied with teaching children simply to avoid misbehavior. The opportunities of modern life are too rich to be missed. Yet missed they will be unless children are introduced to them and motivated to seek them on their own. The focus of this chapter is the parents' dual opportunity to teach children what they know and to motivate them to learn even more than they know.

## *Parental Aspirations and Children's Potentialities*

Just as parents set standards for behavior, they also set goals for learning. If children are to achieve their potential, goals must be high (else they are not goals), but not so high as to discourage effort. Parents betray their child in either direction—by underestimating or overestimating his ability. If they underestimate it, he will be satisfied with less than his best. If they overestimate it, he may not achieve even what he could since he knows they will still be disappointed.

The task, therefore, is to encourage the child to do his best, to keep trying, to attain whatever is possible. This is easier to express in attitudes—of conscientiousness, diligence, and ambition—than in concrete goals. Nevertheless, goals have a more tangible quality than attitudes, so as he

grows older, parents must suggest goals as well: learning to typewrite, making first chair in orchestra, going to college or, more specifically, going to a first-rate college.

Achievement motivation—the desire to achieve high goals—is one consequence of success in this area. Rosen and d'Andrade (1959) find that parents of highly motivated boys are more interested in their sons' performance and set higher goals for them. Without such goal-setting, motivation would not be as strong.

Parental aspirations usually are higher in middle-class families than in working-class families. Only in the tiny American aristocracy is it possible for children to take social status for granted and rest on their parents' (or grandparents') laurels. Among those near the top but not quite at it, the motivation to move upward is strongest of all. (Rosen and d'Andrade find that achievement motivation in sons of lower-middle-class parents eclipses even that of upper-middle- and upper-class families.)

Achievement motivation is primarily a male characteristic because parental aspirations are more stringent for sons than daughters. Parents stress college training for sons more than for daughters—higher education is “nice” for girls but indispensable to male occupational advancement (Aberle and Naegele, 1952).

#### RESPECT FOR THE CHILD

We have already mentioned the danger of overestimating a child's ability. Morrow and Wilson (1961) find a similar distinction between “encouraging” and “pressuring” with respect to achievement. High-school boys do better in school (relative to aptitude) if their parents encourage achievement but don't “overinsist” on it. The distinction is subtle but important.

If parents push too hard, the child is miserable. If they are always “harping on” his grades, insisting that he study, condemning any relaxation, he is more apt to rebel than want to achieve.

The motives that make parents overinsistent are usually self-centered. They want the child to fulfill their own dreams, to accomplish what they didn't, to become someone that they can be proud of. Such motives are legitimate provided they don't blind parents to the child's limitations and lead them to disregard his wishes and feelings. Rosen and d'Andrade find that it is particularly easy for *fathers* to crush their sons. Mothers apparently are less dangerous, perhaps because they are more apt to be affectionate than authoritarian.

It is good for parents to encourage children to do well. But in the last analysis, the child must do the achieving. He is not likely to strive vigorously unless he helps choose the courses, avocations, and vocation where he is to invest so much of himself. Parents, therefore, must respect

the child's autonomy—his existence as a separate person—at the same time that they express high hopes for him and support his efforts to fulfill them.

## Parental Responsiveness

One of the saving graces in raising children is that they have so much impetus of their own. They are not clay, dependent on the potter to be fashioned. They are alive and growing.

Children are blessed with boundless curiosity. Especially little children. As soon as they can talk, they want to know what makes things tick. They ask so many questions that parents often tire of answering. They jabber so much that mothers close their ears in self-defense. Otherwise they would never get their work done. They might even collapse from nervous exhaustion.

### THE CULTIVATION OF CURIOSITY

Children are curious because they know so little. Moreover, they haven't yet learned not to ask questions. When parents tell children to stop pestering or pay no attention to the questions asked, children learn all too soon that it doesn't pay to be curious—it either gets you into trouble or it wastes your breath.

From an educational standpoint, however, curiosity is a priceless asset, worth more than all the encyclopedias, atlases, globes, and dictionaries a parent could buy. Libraries offer substitute facilities, but home equipment will never get used if the spark of curiosity is quenched with parental cold water.

The best way to cultivate curiosity is to reward it—which means taking the trouble to answer questions when they arise. With examples from religious education, here are several principles designed to keep curiosity alive.

*Nonpostponability.* The seriousness with which parents find it possible to take each question determines whether a child will come back for more in the years to follow. If not, he may turn to playmates for whatever answers they have to offer, inadequate as they may be. Or he may decide that asking questions is fruitless and lose that eagerness to learn essential to mental growth. Hence, when Johnny asks, "Where is God?" it pays to take time to answer.

Sometimes parents really are busy and can't spare any time. Provided their excuses are genuine and these rebuffs do not come too often, curiosity should survive. To some extent parents can count on questions coming up again if they're not answered now. But only partially. Those

who take their children's potentialities seriously should *seize every opportunity for discussion*. It's too easy to say, "I'm busy now—come back later." Later may never come, not necessarily because the child hesitates to ask again but just because his attention-span is short and his distractability so great that he can hardly be relied upon to use his raincheck.

*Appropriateness.* The second principle is that *answers must be geared to the child's ability to understand*. This is partly a problem of vocabulary. Children are capable of learning remarkably difficult terms, but new words must be defined as they are used. It doesn't do much good to say that God is "omnipotent" without explaining what that means. Sometimes a shorter word does just as well and saves time.

*Honesty.* Does this mean that God must be brought down to the child's level? Must He be depicted as a bearded patriarch on a golden throne in order for children to be able to "picture" Him? Not unless that is the conception the parents themselves hold. Indeed, settling for anything less than the parents' own beliefs is distracting in the same way the birds and bees distract in sex education. As a third principle, then, *parents should answer with what they believe to be the truth*, no matter how difficult it seems at first to get lofty ideas across. As time goes on, the child's understanding will grow, provided he has been started on the right track.

Take, for example, the question "Where is Heaven?" If parents believe that Heaven is not a place but a divine-human relationship, it may take quite a while to convey the difference. Yet parental attempts to explain their point of view are appreciated by the child, no matter how little he understands at the moment. Honest efforts leave the way open for ideas to develop further in the future.

#### PARENTAL ELUSIVENESS—THE PROBLEM OF SEX EDUCATION

Sometimes the problem is not the complexity of the subject but its unpleasantness. For instance, race, or death, or sex.

Racial questions are toughest for Negro parents because they reflect a dawning awareness of belonging to an outcast group. Hence parents try to avoid the problem by putting off answers or waiting until the child is "old enough" to explain. Even then, as with sex, parents find themselves tongue-tied over how to go about telling, are confused over what terminology to use, and ban certain words as naughty and not to be used at all between parents and children (Goodman, 1952).

The problem for Negro parents in a prejudiced community is very difficult. They know their child is going to be discriminated against, is going to discover that he is a "second-class citizen."

On the theory that well-balanced individuals can take a lot of "punishment" in life, some parents try to give their children as long a time as

possible to think of themselves simply as individuals rather than as members of a race:

So far my four-year-old boy doesn't know that he's a Negro but I'm afraid he's going to find out awfully soon. Last week when we went shopping downtown he dashed into the first elevator he saw and I had a mighty tough time explaining why we should change to the freight elevator without confessing the real reason.

This boy will soon discover the existence of segregation. Then, he'll ply his parents with questions excruciatingly difficult to answer. Beyond admitting the facts of prejudice and discrimination, they can reassure him of their love and appreciation of his worth. Moreover, they can share their understanding of the causes of prejudice and help him see those who discriminate against him as human beings like himself.

These tasks are difficult but not impossible. As in other aspects of education, parents who take a growing child into their confidence establish a we-feeling that can hardly be equalled as a base of operations in a bewildering world.

How about death? Should children be told about it? Some parents try to protect them from knowing about the death of a neighbor or pet. Yet the fact of death is no more avoidable than the "facts of life." Far better for parent and child to be able to discuss death openly when it occurs than for the child to sense this is a hush-hush topic, too terrible to mention.

No matter what happens in the world around, children who are loved feel secure. Studies in Great Britain during World War II showed that those who stayed in London with their parents during bombing raids were less afraid and emotionally upset than those who were evacuated to country estates away from their families (Freud and Burlingham, 1943). As children hear of war, crime, and death, they want to know how their parents feel about these strange events. Precisely how parents interpret these mysteries counts less than the child's sense that "we're in this together." Such a sense of security provides a workable basis for living in a world where one can never be entirely sure what the next minute will bring.

*What Parents Actually Do and Don't Do.* Faced with embarrassing questions, parents manage to find more excuses than usual for not answering questions. Sears summarizes parental policies toward five-year-olds' questions about sex under the general heading of "information control." In other words, American parents generally believe in *not* satisfying their children's curiosity:

Some mothers were clearly antagonistic to what they called the "modern doctrines" that they felt were advocated in some child-training books and newspaper columns. . . . When a mother was opposed to giving any sex information to children, however, she had to be able to give the child some

other explanation when a younger sibling was born. One said to her son, "Gee, I'm getting fat. I guess I'll have to go away for a week or so and go on a diet. . . ." Others spoke of "putting in an order for a baby at the hospital."

Most of the mothers were willing to tell their children a little more than that about the reproductive process, however. At least, they described the presence of the new baby inside the mother. Mothers who had tried to be completely free and open in their information-giving usually found, however, that there was a point beyond which they were unwilling to go in answering the child's questions. . . .

It is safe to say that not one family in our sample was completely free and open in the discussion of sex with their young children. (Sears, 1957: 190-92.)

Closely related to parental unwillingness to answer embarrassing questions is their tendency to avoid sexual terminology. Sears calls this "avoiding labels." This policy limits the answers parents give and limits even more their educational initiative:

Many families got along without any names for the genital area, using vague terms of reference like "it" or "there." . . . When communication was necessary between parent and child, one of the babyish toileting terms current in the family was used, as in a child's "Mommy, my wee-wee hurts." . . . Despite the absence of explicit language, however, mothers and children seemed to be able to communicate with each other fairly effectively about some events in the intellectual shadowland of sex, as was illustrated in the following interchange between mother and son:

The mother saw the boy rubbing his penis. She said:

"Johnny, what are you doing?"

"Nothing, Mummy."

"Well, stop it, then."

"O.K." and he stopped.

While some parents avoided any sort of labeling in the area of sex, some did provide their children with names for the genital parts of the body. We did not encounter anyone, however, who helped the children to identify the *emotional* states related to sex. Many mothers said to a child something like: "You're angry and upset now. We'll talk about it when you're calmer." But none, as far as we could tell, said: "You're feeling sexy, that's why you're acting like that." (Sears, pp. 189-90.)

Sears finds these dual forms of elusiveness (information control and avoiding labels) part of a larger pattern of avoiding the issue of sex. Parents also use (1) distraction rather than directly disciplinary approaches to unwanted sexual behavior and (2) indirect, nonsexual arguments for conforming to sexual norms (for example, telling the child he will catch cold if he doesn't get dressed). Sex education—whether intellectual or practical—is a restricted area for most parents.

Middle-class parents—despite their emphasis on education in general—are no freer than lower-class parents in sex education. [In one Iowa sample, less than half the parents of either social level gave full and frank replies to sex questions from their daughters (Burchinal, 1960).]

**Table 22-1—Major Sources of Sex Information for Boys and Girls**

Source	Boys	Girls
Mother	25%	71%
Father	23	5
Companions	40	43
Teachers	41	47
Reading	36	44
Total	165%	210%
No. of cases	234	218

Adapted from Lee, 1952: 471. Source: Oregon high-school students. Totals add to more than 100% because some students have more than one source.

Daughters come off better than sons. Table 22-1 shows that most Oregon mothers tell their daughters at least something (even if only to forewarn them about menstruation). Sons, however, often get no sex education from either parent, even though fathers communicate with sons more than with daughters. Fathers are so negligent with their children that sons are just as apt to be informed by the cross-sex parent as by the parent of their own sex. As a result of parental failure, boys often receive their *only* sex education from companions or teachers, whereas for girls these are usually supplementary sources. Lee reports that in many parts of the United States parents and teachers do even less educating than in Oregon, leaving companions elsewhere an even more prominent source.

Although today's parents seldom "tell all" about sex, they nevertheless respond more than their predecessors. The Victorian era was notoriously close-mouthed. Since World War I, however, the proportion of British parents giving the impression that "sex is something not to be talked about" has dwindled steadily (Chesser, 1957: 163). Consequently, a rising proportion of children have mustered up enough courage to ask their parents about the facts of life. And more of those asking have been told the truth and told all they wanted to know (p. 167). Even so, this was still a minority of the whole as late as World War II.

Kingsley Davis (1940) suggests that sex will always be a difficult topic between parent and child since it comes so close to violating the incest taboo (that is, the ban on sexual relations between parents and children). He cites the observation of Malinowski that "Even among the essentially 'unrepressed' Trobrianders the parent is never the confidant in matters of sex" (1927: 36). Hence, it would be too much to expect that either parents or children (especially adolescents) would ever find sexual topics as easy to talk about as other ones. Always, this is an area of some difficulty. Nevertheless, the question remains: how much *should* parents respond to their children's sexual curiosity?

*Responsive Parents and Their Children.* Some parents are less

reticent than others. What kind of parents are most responsive, and what effects do they have on their children?

Generally speaking, responsive parents also do a good job of socialization in other respects. For example, parents with the happiest marriages are more apt to tell the truth about sex, whereas unhappily married parents often brush off their children's questions and even more often respond with untruths (Chesser, p. 201). Similarly, a relatively permissive approach to the sexual problems of preschool children is used by mothers who are emotionally warm and seldom spank their children (Sears, p. 212). From the previous chapter we know that emotional coldness and physical punishment prevent good parent-child relations. Therefore, it appears that responding to the child's sexual curiosity is part of a broad pattern of effective child-rearing practices.

**Table 22-2—Consequences of Parental vs. Alternative Sources of Sex Education**

	MAIN SOURCE OF EARLY SEX EDUCATION			
	Parents	Reading	Other Adults	Companions
Proportion without premarital intercourse	70%	61%	60%	54%
Proportion with exceptionally or very happy marriages	77	69	62	53
No. of cases	325	136	245	436

Adapted from Chesser, 1957: 175. Source: Married women patients of British physicians. Note: Reciprocal percentages had premarital intercourse or had less happy marriages, respectively.

This generalization is supported by evidence that children who receive their sex education from their parents conform more closely to social norms than those whose parents fail them in this respect. Table 22-2 shows that parent-educated British women have the highest rate of premarital chastity (which Chapter 5 suggested is the ideal pattern) and the highest degree of marital happiness (another proof of successful socialization). On both counts, books and pamphlets are next best, followed by other adults, leaving companions (that is, "the gutter") the worst source of sex education.

Sex education by parents may be difficult, but for those who are mature enough and love their children enough, it is part of parental responsibility toward children and pays off in better socialization than any other source can provide. Parents sometimes wonder whether sex information will stimulate sexual promiscuity. The answer from Chesser's data seems to be quite the opposite. The reason presumably is that parents inculcate social norms along with factual answers. On the other hand, children whose curiosity is not satisfied by their parents are not likely to remain ignorant but turn to other sources. When they turn to companions, they seldom receive comparable normative training. In-



deed, they often learn quite the opposite, since the peer group norm (at least for males) may be promiscuity.

*Illustrative Responses.* Because parents often feel tongue-tied, it may be useful to illustrate possible responses to sex questions.

For a child the question "Where did I come from?" is innocent enough. He is oblivious to the connotations of "hush and pretend" stirred up in his mother's mind. All he wants is the answer to another question—like the one he just received to "Where did this book come from?" For his purposes the best answer is simple and direct. Different parents phrase it in different ways. There is no "best" answer as long as it meets the child's need and is accurate.

The following answers to typical questions should not be taken as prescriptions but simply as examples:

Q. "Where did I come from?"

A. "You grew inside of me."

Q. "Where?" (One question leads to another—either soon or late.)

A. "In a special place called the uterus." (References to tummy or stomach are apt to snarl the conversation in ideas of being eaten.)

Q. "Where is the uterus?"

A. "Inside here." (At this point a simple diagram of female internal anatomy may help. If the mother is not an artist, she may use an encyclopedia or a special book for children.)

Q. "How did I get there?"

A. "Mummy had a tiny egg which joined with a tiny sperm from daddy and grew into a baby."

More drawing may be needed to show where the egg came from, etc. Some parents wonder how soon daddy should be brought into the story. After all the physiology of reproduction is difficult enough without having to discuss intercourse too! Yet this is another of those eventual discoveries that can be taken in stride most easily when the occasion first demands it. The chances are the child will be satisfied by brief answers and pursue his questions further only at intervals. On the other hand, a concentrated barrage of questions is more apt to signify an inquiring mind than morbid preoccupation.

Most experts believe that no age is too young to be told the facts of life. If a child is old enough to ask questions, he is old enough to be answered. Of course the answers should fit the questions. One about reproduction need touch off no more detailed a lecture than one about corn production. Yet neither lecture involves much danger of "overdosing" the child. As soon as he is tired, he will turn his attention elsewhere. Answers too complex to be understood will not harm him. They just waste his parents' energy!

## Parental Stimulation

Natural curiosity is a powerful motive for learning. It is not, however, entirely innate and unaffected by the environment. Parents can supplement inborn motivation in at least two ways—by their own example and by introducing their children to other educational influences.

### THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

The parents' activities set an example for children that influences them powerfully. Little children habitually play at "being Daddy and Mommy," including whatever activities are valued by the parents.

If parents go to church regularly, children are more apt to enjoy Sunday School (or at least less apt to resist). Parents who try to ship their children off to church while they play golf, sleep in bed, read *The New York Times* or catch up on housework must expect resistance.

If classical music is played on the radio or record-player, children not only observe what it means to the parents but also acquire a repertoire of musical knowledge by osmosis. Much of the learning that takes place at home is automatic. It does not require deliberate instruction but is a by-product of the environment the parents provide.

Schramm notes (1961: 182) a similar process with respect to taste in television fare:

... if a parent views educational television, then the child is almost sure to do so; and if neither parent does view educational television, then the child is almost sure *not* to do so. This is a very potent kind of influence. We venture to say also that if parents use the Sunday press conferences and discussions, then the children are almost sure to do so when they come to be old enough. Example is the best persuader. . . .

### PARENTAL INITIATIVE

Much of what children learn at home is accidental, but learning can also be intentional. Parents concerned to enrich their children's lives (besides setting good examples) can involve their children in purposeful educational activities at home and expose them to educational resources outside the home.

*Education at Home.* Bossard and Boll stress the impact of family talk on children who share in dinner-table conversations day after day, year after year. They suggest that "in many respects, family table talk may be likened to a university seminar on family culture that continues for a number of semesters" (1960: 241). During and after the meal, parents can ask questions about school, discuss the day's news, conduct quiz games, share family mail. Such communication processes transmit

the family culture (including values and attitudes) from generation to generation.

In the sexual area the natural reticence between generations means that parents must sometimes take the initiative when the child does not. Responsiveness is fine as far as it goes, but it must be supplemented by responsibility when questions cease. Religious parents take this responsibility especially seriously. [The more religious the parents, the larger the proportion who are the main source of sex education for their children (Chesser, p. 249).]

Sex teaching must be done by precept rather than example. Since the sexual side of marriage is private, sex education must be undertaken deliberately rather than left to interpreting the meaning of events.

As puberty approaches, information about menstruation and other physiological changes needs to be given to both sexes. If parents are asked about these topics, so much the better. If not, parents need to be sure preadolescents understand the changes which are about to take place.

The problem is not simply one of biological information. Parents' attitudes can have a profound effect on adolescent emotional and sexual adjustment. Growing up can be interpreted as challenging and rewarding instead of unpleasant and negative. The menstrual cycle can be described as a fascinating aspect of the reproductive process, rather than as an illness or "curse."

Parental aid is especially important in coping with the surging sexual feelings of adolescent boys. The fact that male sex drive reaches its peak during adolescence emphasizes the urgency of parental guidance.

What adolescents need most is help in deciding between right and wrong in relations between the sexes. When parents have the respect and confidence of their children, their guidance is welcomed.

Teaching about marriage has a place too. Seldom is this a systematic course of instruction. Yet parents who want their children to be well prepared communicate their philosophy and techniques of married living.

This can be done in various ways. Some parents preach sermons on the importance of unselfishness and forgiveness in marriage whenever their children are in a receptive mood. Others interpret to their children the significance of domestic current events. When everyone has had a good time raking leaves, a comment about the satisfactions of cooperative work helps children realize why the afternoon has been fun. When parents have a scrap, children profit from observing the process of reconciliation and being told how the trouble developed in the first place. By taking children into their confidence, parents help them understand the processes that lead couples into and out of difficulty. Such under-

standing is worth more than a dozen wedding presents when they enter their own marriages.

Parental initiative in the home involves not only exposing children to desirable influences but also shielding them from undesirable ones. TV requires both positive and protective influence from the parents. High-status parents encourage their children to watch good programs (even beyond their usual bedtime) and control the types of programs watched. Crime and violence are especially forbidden (Blood, 1961). Similarly, middle-class parents censor the movies their children attend and other influences to which their children are exposed—inside and outside the home. In such ways they control the development of their children more rigorously. By contrast, lower-class parents often pursue laissez faire policies, allowing their children to absorb whatever they will from whatever direction. Even in the lower-lower class, however, parental indifference is not the general practice.

*External Resources.* Resources outside the home are also available for educating children. Since formal schooling is compulsory, it can be taken for granted. The remaining community resources are optional and depend on parental initiative: concerts, plays, museums, libraries, travel—the list is almost endless.

Another category of resources is extracurricular schools and lessons—Sunday Schools, music lessons, art lessons, and so forth.

The crucial problem for parents is how much initiative they should take. With formal schooling, parents don't wait for the child's initiative but insist on regular attendance because they know its value. The fact that school is compulsory and everyone else goes too makes it easier to take school for granted.

In optional areas parents must exert even stronger pressure if children are not spontaneously interested. Parents are not being arrogant when they say they know better than the child what is good for him. Having lived longer, they do! When they insist that he go to Sunday School or take music lessons, they are doing him a favor (which in the long run he will probably appreciate). To be sure, they cannot force him to be educated against his will. They must make learning as attractive and as rewarding as possible. Nevertheless, their initiative legitimately extends into the extracurricular area.

Most communities have such opportunities available, but families differ widely in the extent to which they take advantage of them. Time, energy, and money are prerequisites. How much the parents have to spend per child depends partly on how many children they have.

*The Dissipation of Parental Efforts.* In large families—other things being equal—parents cannot give children as much individual attention. From the standpoint of avoiding overprotection, this is an advantage.

But from the standpoint of educating and motivating the child, it is a handicap. Given a particular amount of parental effort, the larger the family, the less attention per child.

As a result, children in large families often acquire less achievement motivation, especially in the working class. Table 22-3 shows that the

**Table 22-3—Achievement Motivation, by Family Size and Birth Order**

Birth Order	NUMBER OF CHILDREN		
	1-2	3-4	5+
Oldest	4.3	2.9	1.0
Intermediate	—	3.4	2.0
Youngest	5.9	3.9	2.8

Adapted from Rosen, 1961: 582. Source: Working class boys aged eight to fourteen from four north-eastern states. Achievement motivation scores derived from Thematic-Apperception-Test-type stories in response to ambiguous pictures, by scoring the frequency of evaluating performance in competition with standards of excellence.

larger the family, the lower the motivation. This dissipation of parental stimulation particularly deprives the oldest child. On him falls the burden of caring for younger siblings. He often drops out of high school to help support the family. He may learn something about duty and responsibility, but he cannot hope to get ahead. His life is largely sacrificed for the sake of his brothers and sisters.

In the middle class the impact of extra children is less severe. The father's income is usually big enough for the mother to stay home and care for the children. Perhaps they can afford both the basic necessities of life and the educational luxuries. Indeed, in the upper class and upper-middle class, families of three and four children manage as well or better by their children than smaller ones. But even at this high social level, parental resources are noticeably strained beyond four children (Rosen, 1961: 578).

The larger the family, therefore, the more strenuously parents must extend themselves if the children's talents are to be developed.

## Parental Structuring of Learning

Schools do not carry out their entire educational task on their own premises but assign extra work to be done at home. Extracurricular lessons (of which music lessons are the prime example) require home practice. Hence, for both regular and extra schooling the home serves as study hall.

The twin tasks of homework and practicing cause friction in many families. Friction can be reduced by minimizing distractions, providing encouragement, and rewarding achievement.

## MINIMIZING DISTRACTIONS

Parents must safeguard the child's opportunity to study. For efficient studying, peace and quiet are necessary. To find them, there may have to be special places for study or special times when younger siblings or even the parents themselves are not allowed to make distracting noises (even if those noises are labeled "music").

TV is an able distractor. Televiewing and studying cannot go on in the same room at the same time. For easily distracted students they can hardly go on in the same house simultaneously. Nevertheless, by the time adolescence is reached, well-socialized children have enough self-control to shift their attention from screen to print. Schramm (p. 172) classifies those who read much and watch seldom as "reality-oriented":

In the sixth grade the reality-oriented group is very small, but by the tenth grade it has grown a great deal. When we studied children in this group we found that they are different from others in that they have internalized the social norm of self-betterment, deferred gratification, and activity which is considered, in our culture, to be typical of the upward mobile middle class.

In other words, parents who endow their child with achievement motivation can leave the rest to him. He will disdain ordinary television and prefer reading enough to invest his time where it counts. Nevertheless, in borderline cases and on borderline occasions, parents may still have to protect wavering resolves to study from undue temptation.

Temptation comes not only on the screen but in the flesh. The attractions of the opposite sex can pre-empt study time too. While a book on marriage is not likely to oppose dating completely, work and play must be kept in balance. Recreation (including dating) is a legitimate part of life—but only a part. Despite such partial successes in integrating dating with studying as collegiate "study dates," by and large the two are incompatible. Young marriages may resolve the need to date, but they also precipitate the partners into premature child-bearing and wage-earning before education is completed.

This line of thinking leads Poffenberger to conclude that minimizing distractions from learning may require sexual restraints in addition to other limits:

The present preoccupation with sex in the culture needs to be replaced by other values. The survival of our highly technical society is dependent on inculcating in young people a drive for educational and intellectual achievement as well as occupational and professional productivity. . . . To facilitate (this objective), it seems necessary for the society to take the position that young people must hold chastity as a value at least until they have reached relative economic, social and emotional maturity. . . . If these values are important to the society, it is the task of parents as well as adolescents to see that they are upheld. (Poffenberger, 1960: 330.)

## ENCOURAGING PRACTICE

Besides providing a framework within which studying is possible, parents can help children get started on tasks and get through with them.

Getting started is easier when it is ritualized. If homework begins regularly right after dinner, less inner struggle is necessary to get down to it. Routine scheduling from day to day and week to week provides another framework (besides physical quiet) within which learning occurs more easily.

Except for helping to establish regular patterns, parents must beware of taking over the responsibility for getting work actually done. It is all too easy for parents to nag about getting started. For children as much as for anyone else nagging stiffens resistance rather than overcoming it.

When other activities interfere with the usual schedule, parents can sometimes help by asking the child what time he plans to choose instead. This gives him a sense of choice and yet commits him to a specific objective.

By and large homework is a solitary business. Sometimes, however, collaborators are needed and parents can help coach. When an exam is pending, parents can ask review questions. When the child is stumped, they can sometimes help him find his way through unfamiliar problems. But only sometimes. The farther the child advances, the harder it is for parents to keep up. Perhaps both generations can search together. As long as the child shares in the learning process and doesn't just have work done *for* him, he learns along with the parents.

Music-practicing, unlike homework, benefits from regular collaboration. Even in studying the piano, four-hand duets are more sociable. Even when parents are unskilled, children welcome someone beside them on the bench. For any other instrument, accompanists are even more valuable. Few instruments except the piano sound pleasant alone the first year or two. Stringed instruments especially sound awful at first. Parents can make the early stages vastly more satisfying by surrounding the child's feeble instrumentation with supporting chords and melodies.

## REWARDING ACHIEVEMENT

When parent and child practice together, learning becomes intrinsically rewarding. Children relish the exclusive companionship of a parent under any circumstances. Of course, the parent may have to muster up all the patience he possesses and hold his tongue when tempted to criticize. His attitude must be supportive if his presence is to be helpful.

Regardless of whether the parent participates actively in the learning

situation, the previous chapter suggests the importance of rewarding the child if he is to continue trying in the future. To sustain a high level of motivation, parents must take an active interest in what he does. As he progresses, they must reward his achievements with warmth and approval (Rosen and d'Andrade, 1959).

For example, when the orchestra gives a concert, parents must be in the audience. When a project is brought home from school, they must take the trouble to look at it. When the Scouts hold a Court of Honor, they must attend. In short, whatever talent the parents want to encourage, they must invest some of themselves as well as their money in. Teacher-approval is not enough, for teachers seldom have a close relationship to their students. How the parents react—whether indifferently or attentively—determines whether the child's interest in high achievement will be sustained and encouraged.



# *Family Living*

A family is not only an instrument for rearing children. It is also a group of people living together. Like other groups, it must maintain inner harmony and satisfaction—a task complicated by the continually changing ages of the family members. The ease with which this task can be accomplished depends partly on the adequacy of the facilities that comprise their environment—both inside and outside the home.

## Facilities for Family Living

Physical facilities in the form of house and equipment plus social facilities in the form of neighborhood, school, church, and recreational sites are the main resources utilized in family living.

### HOUSING THE FAMILY

The family's house or apartment limits the activities they can engage in together. The space, the allocation of rooms, and the furniture have extensive repercussions on their behavior.

Living space and furniture needs differ considerably over the life cycle. Newlyweds tend to buy furniture that will be comfortable for themselves and stylish for their friends. Inspired by *House Beautiful*,

they install wall-to-wall carpeting, attractive upholstery, and fragile lamps. For a year or two their needs are handsomely met.

Then comes the baby. He dumps food on the carpet, knocks over the lamps, and scars the polished wood—not because he is vicious, but just because he is young, clumsy, and likes to experiment.

*Child-Proofing the Home.* Wear and tear could be decreased by child-proofing the home. Given a child of specified age, vitality, and self-control, the damage wreaked reflects the vulnerability of the environment.

To child-proof a picturebook home requires many steps. Wall-to-wall carpeting could be stored away, to be replaced by washable throw rugs on the hardwood, or by marbled tile flooring (neither too light nor too dark, so as to mask the dust and dirt tracked in by little feet). Washable paints and scrubbable wallpaper are available for the walls. Smart upholstery could be covered by washable slip covers to catch spilled food and grimy fingerprints, or replaced by plastic or leather. Coiled springs in easy chairs and sofas are notorious temptations to bouncing when mother isn't looking. Broken springs could be avoided by substituting foam rubber cushions. When the baby pulls himself up to a standing position, he fingerprints white drapes or tears lace curtains. Rugged, figured materials might be an alternative.

Even the wooden surfaces of tables and chairs are vulnerable. Polished wood, especially mahogany, shows scars and dents from weapon-wielding hands. One study shows that parents with "traditional" child-rearing philosophies prefer mahogany furniture, but that "developmental" parents prefer the lighter woods and rougher finish of Colonial furniture. As one mother expressed it, "The more beat up our pine coffee table gets, the more lived-with it looks" (Blood, 1952a).

Finally, there are articles in prechild living rooms that could be stored away "for the duration." Bric-à-brac frequent the flat surfaces accessible to climbing youngsters: handsome potteryware, glassware, and other smashables. It is too much to expect two-year-olds to leave such fascinating objects alone or handle them safely. A few years on the pantry shelf leaves children and parents less worried and the breakables intact for the day when the children are old enough to live with them.

Anyone can store away decorative objects for a few years, but few couples can afford to replace their furniture when children come. Hence, young couples need to anticipate the consequences for themselves, the furniture, and their children when they embark on interior decorating. As one parent stuck with handsome but impractical furniture expressed it, "If I had only known then what I know now about children!" (Blood, p. 201).

At first my fiancé and I were not planning our home around the four children we are hoping to have. We had been thinking about a French Pro-

vincial house with a recreation room in the basement for the kids. I never stopped to think that the children won't want to be in the basement all the time and would be hard on the kind of living room we had planned. Now, however, we are planning somewhat more sturdy furniture for the first part of our married life, and perhaps when our children are old enough, we can have our French Provincial.

Breakable windows can't be stored away, but anxiety about baseballs can be alleviated by insuring today's expensive picture windows.

No matter how heavily insured or how indestructible the house, parents must teach their children to have respect for property, not to spill food on the floor, not to write on walls. The purpose of child-proofing is not to eliminate the need for property-socialization but to minimize the consequences of the inevitable failures when children are small. The wealthier the family, the less their anxiety about cleaning and replacement costs, so the more fragile the environment they can afford.

Parents who respect their own rights as persons don't want to live in a gymnasium. They have needs the house should serve too. Hence, one room of even a small house may be set aside for parental hobbies, relaxation, and homework. Also, common rooms like the living room are not made of cast iron but include concessions to adult comfort and grace that limit childish boisterousness.

*Insulating Competing Activities.* Child-proofing is designed to cope with the temporary destructiveness of unsocialized toddlers. The need for environmental durability diminishes rapidly as the last child reaches teachable age. However, as long as multiple family members share the same house, conflicts among them can be minimized by strategic architecture, room-use planning, and equipment acquisitions:

Conflict in the American home often centers around use of scarce physical facilities. The current trends to a second car, a second television set, and a second telephone result . . . in decreased tension for family personnel who can now use parallel facilities simultaneously instead of having to compete for control of single channels. Similarly, the new-fangled recreation room provides the rest of the family with a retreat when daughter decides to throw a party in the living room, taking the tension off competition for "the only room in the house where I can entertain my friends." (Blood, 1960.)

Such conflicts intensify as children get older. They result not from failures in socialization but from the natural development of adolescent interests. A 1957 survey of adolescent girls by the Gilbert Youth Research Company found parent-child conflict over the telephone almost universal when only one line is available. Since the average teenager uses the phone more than an hour a day, the demand on facilities out-runs the supply whenever the whole family is at home. The larger the family, the larger the number of bottlenecks, with bathrooms at 7:30 A.M. perhaps the most acute example.

Some conflicts can be prevented or reduced by zones of privacy within the house. Noises that would antagonize a father reading the newspaper or a daughter doing her homework are more tolerable when muffled by closed doors. Contrary to the theory held by home architects that "open planning" creates greater sociability, kitchens without walls and rooms that "flow" into one another create irritability. The din of kitchen machinery (dishwasher, garbage disposal, clothes washer and dryer) needs to be segregated by walls and closed doors from the rest of the house. The sounds of music need segregation too. If family members want to practice the piano and listen to television simultaneously, the equipment must be dispersed in separate rooms of the house. A "music room" equipped with record-player, radio, television, and piano is fine for a bachelor but prevents parallel musical activities for families of more than one.

In general, the more widely potentially competitive activities are dispersed throughout the house and segregated by soundproof walls, the less conflict there will be among family members over the use of space.

#### CHOICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD

Because of the intensity of neighborhood interaction, choosing a place to live is like choosing a marriage partner. Sociological studies buttress popular knowledge that neighborhoods differ. Social classes, nationality groups, religious groups, and races tend to be segregated in particular parts of a city. Just as mixed marriages create extra problems, so do mixed neighborhoods. Homogamous neighborhoods produce spontaneous friendships and feelings of congeniality. In mixed neighborhoods, friendships must be worked at, though they are still possible.

Worse than uncongenial friends, however, are no friends at all. This danger primarily affects children. Neighborhoods go through cycles in age composition. New subdivisions swarm with preschool children who don't have enough babysitters to take care of them. Ten years later there is a surplus of babysitters (Henry, 1953). A decade more and even the teenagers are gone, leaving middle-aged parents behind. If a family with young children moves in at this point, there may be scarcely a playmate for blocks around.

Choosing a house entails choosing friends for parents and playmates and schools for the children. Looking beyond the four walls of a prospective house, therefore, makes good anticipatory sense.

### Family Problem-Solving

Family problems can be minimized by appropriate facilities, but the clash of wills in any group is to some extent inevitable. In families the

intimacy and emotional intensity of relationships make conflict more likely than in casual groups. The complications of differing sexes and ages in the family intensify the difficulties of settling troubles.

Families are bigger today than at any time since the 1920's. Yet skyrocketing building costs have shrunk living space to such minimal dimensions that privacy and quiet are difficult to find. At the same time permissive parents give freer rein to their space-hampered children. The result is more noise and clutter per child per square foot than ever before in the history of the middle class (Blood, 1953).

For parents who were brought up strictly but try to raise their children more flexibly, the consequences are especially difficult. No one "issue" is most troublesome, but a thousand little frictions pile up into emotional tautness. The mother especially constantly interacts with her children at the same time that she tries to keep up with the washing, pressing, mending, cooking, and dishwashing. Explosions come when so many demands are made at once that not all can be met:

Last night Dan came home late to supper. The kids were hollering for their dessert and he wanted his supper, so I felt like an automat. He wanted me to sit down and hear about his troubles, but I had to tell him we'd talk about it later. He said, "I can see that you're not one bit interested in me. All you think of is the kids!" Then I blew up and really told him off. I told him that if he had to go through everything I had, he wouldn't feel like listening to someone else's troubles either.

Parental tension infects children too, making them more quarrelsome and irritable.

Family crises where parents and children snap at each other are especially common on that proverbial bane of every mother's existence: rainy days. Mothers long for the end of school vacations, house-confining colds, and dreary weather so the children can get off their hands for awhile.

#### RESOLVING CONFLICT OVER SCARCE FACILITIES

Where facilities cannot be enlarged because of budgetary or other practical limitations, the solution is to establish priority systems:

If the bone of contention is the television set, a schedule for the whole week, born of a major showdown, may take the place of petty conflict "every hour on the hour." If the scarcity has been financial, the record of decisions takes the form of a budget. Here the mutual recriminations sparked by overdrawn bank accounts can be obviated by advance planning about where the money is to be spent. (Blood, 1960.)

Priority systems determine which family member's wishes should take precedence. For example, the hardest working member of the family should have his choice of recreational activities, the rarest viewer of television the chance to watch what he wishes, the newest swimmer

the choice of lakes to learn in. Or taking-turns may be the principle adopted when competing interests are equally strong. Even for interests that are highly variable, systematic solutions are sometimes available. For example, the burden of answering the next phone call may be assigned to whoever had the benefit of the last one. Whatever the problem, almost any system ends personal conflict once it is agreed on.

In some families priority is assigned more consistently to one generation or the other—either the adults or the children generally having their say.

*Adult Priority.* Historically, the problem of family living was solved by a caste system. Parents formed the privileged caste. "Little children should be seen and not heard." Children were expected to conform to adult wishes, work hard on the family farm, and beware of bothering busy parents.

As long as adult priority was practiced by everybody, the caste system worked well. Any system works best when it is taken for granted. That is no longer true of adult priority.

Today family patterns are highly varied. Parents who seek to perpetuate their priority must contend with their own and their children's knowledge that the rights of parents have gone the way of the "divine right of kings."

For parents, awareness of competing democratic ideas means that authority cannot be wielded arbitrarily without misgivings. Sensitive to possible criticism by others, authoritarian parents can no longer issue orders with equanimity.

Meanwhile, children have acquired the notion that they have rights too. Hence, parental authoritarianism is at least resented if not actively resisted:

Mother and I had a showdown last week because she insisted on reading my letters from Dave. She maintains that no matter how old a girl is—whether twenty-one or thirty-one—she should still confide everything in her mother. She *is* my mother, and I don't want to flout her. But I'd feel more like confiding in her if she didn't insist on everything.

*The Child Is King.* As happens so often in human history, the pendulum swung from one extreme to the other. Rebellious children resolved to do better by *their* children and sensitive experts defended the "rights of infants." A typical guidebook urged parents to put up with a little "annoyance" for the sake of the "welfare" of the child and proclaimed that "the parent's chief value in life should be to help his children" (Harper, 1949: 268).

If parents were not at the same time persons, breadwinners or housekeepers, and husbands or wives, such counsel would be feasible. But since parents have other roles to play, the "children-first" motto gets people

into trouble. From giving too little attention to children, giving too much becomes the problem. Children's demands are often insatiable:

The kiddies always want something different from what they get—it's most frustrating and I have no patience with them. I hate people who swear, but I say under my breath, "Damn those kids!" One busy day last week Jane wanted me to wash her doll's clothes. That wasn't so bad, but next the clothes had to be pressed just so. After that she insisted that I sit down and mend a frayed hem on the doll's dress. At that, my patience just gave out.

When parents abandon their own interests and responsibilities to their children's desires for attention and companionship, trouble results. When the child becomes a tyrant, his mother feels like a martyr. Though she may devote enormous amounts of time and energy to her children, she begrudges the sacrifice of her own interests. Her grudge is both nourished within during moments of despair and wielded against her children in moments of anger: "Look at all I've done for you—and you don't appreciate it!" Such diatribes confuse and embitter the child, coming as they do after what have seemed to be enjoyable times together.

The end result is the kind of parent-child tension Della Cyrus (1946) has caricatured so well:

Actually the intense, mutually exhausting emotional and physical relationships which develop between mothers and preschool children in the typical urban family lead inevitably to that worst of all maternal sins, overmothering with undercurrents of hostility, and that most fatal of all child responses, overdependence with undercurrents of resentment.

Substituting tyrannical children for authoritarian parents does not improve the family situation. However, priorities for adults or children are not always carried to the extremes we have portrayed. In moderation they reflect differing parental values with less disastrous consequences.

*The Person-Centered Family.* Some families assign priority to neither generation but view every member of the family as equally important. This means that childish interests are limited by the parents' interests (and vice versa). For example, a happy medium can be found between every child's desire to keep his parents home at night and the parents' enjoyment of social life and community events. In adult-centered families parents feel they have a right to go out all they want, limited only by the size of their babysitter budget. In child-centered families parents feel it is their duty to spend their evenings at home. When they do go out, they feel shamefaced and the children resentful. Compromise lies somewhere between—not so much in a fixed quota of nights out but in a working balance between the parents' and children's contradictory wishes. Balance can be found not only by measuring

the strength of wish against wish but also by recognizing that both generations have a right to achieve their wishes within limits.

Given no customary priority for either generation, such families must find other bases for resolving intergenerational conflicts.

*Sibling Rivalry over Parental Affection.* The toughest conflicts in families are not those between generations but among brothers and sisters. Jealousy between children is almost universal. In families where it is not apparent on the surface, it often crops up in fantasies and dreams reflecting unconscious feelings. Jealousy originates in a young child's resentment at being displaced by a new baby. Previously (if he was the only child) he was the center of attention, but now an intruder receives most of that attention. Losing his mother's companionship makes him bitter and hostile. First-born children are unusually aggressive toward their parents. Younger siblings, in turn, tend to attack the next oldest child (Sears, p. 417). In each case rivalry is focused on the adjacent child, the chief competitor.

Sibling rivalry can seldom be entirely prevented. However, the traumatic consequences of sharing one's parents with a stranger can be minimized. Children who are informed months ahead of the impending arrival have more time to get used to the idea and may become as eager for his delivery as their parents. More importantly, the father and especially the mother can give the displaced child extra doses of time and affection to help allay his fears of losing their love.

In later years every child needs to feel that he is loved and accepted as much as his brothers and sisters. Many an emotionally disturbed person was slighted by his parents while another was favored. The best of parents are occasionally accused of favoritism, but they can do much to make this accusation undeserved. Of primary importance is unreserved affection for all their children. Beyond this is fairness and appropriateness in handling each child.

Because siblings differ in age, equality of treatment is not always appropriate. Suppose a six-year-old would like to be able to stay up like his nine-year-old sister. He can be assured that he too will be able to stay up till 8:00 when he's nine. In actual practice, however, older children often "run interference" for younger siblings in securing age-graded privileges. Parental resistance to the first child's advances weakens by the time later ones come along. Such changes are often begrudged by the older child:

When Paul and I were both in our teens, he would often go to my parents saying "You never let me do that when I was his age." I know it is true that I was allowed to do more things at an earlier age than he was. However, I did not like him to say such things to my parents. We always got along best when they were not at home, for when they were not around we were not vying for their attention.



Sometimes parents tighten up with subsequent children, feeling they learned a lesson from earlier permissiveness. Whichever way they change, the child who is treated more strictly is likely to complain. If parents can get across to each child that they care even though they may not be able to satisfy every demand, conflict should diminish. By adolescence it may even vanish:

Our parents' methods of dealing with us have varied with the individual and his apparent needs. This has resulted in three siblings who love and respect each other and their parents, and yet who are as different as three kids in the same family can be—interest-wise. Each of us has been encouraged in areas of our own interests and abilities instead of made to feel that we had to keep up with each other.

Perhaps the reason siblings accept each other in adolescence is that they pair off against their parents! In any case, it relieves parents to know rivalry is more or less inevitable in tightly knit families. Like any conflict, sibling rivalry provides opportunities for learning how to resolve friction, to share toys—in short, to get along with other people. This goal cannot be reached in “one easy lesson.” But when parents handle their children with fairness, flexibility, and understanding, knowledge about human relations grows from even as unpromising a source as sibling squabbling.

#### FAMILY DECISION-MAKING

Chapter 12 dealt with decision-making processes for husbands and wives. With children added, everything gets more complicated. Numerous family decisions have implications for the children, and they in turn want family help with their own problems.

As children grow older, they want to have more say in decision-making. Many parents consult adolescent children before making family decisions and begin giving them a voice in the decision-weighting itself.

Some families organize a formal council, with regular meeting times and perhaps even a constitution and by-laws. Beasley frowns on such formalities (1954: 76). Yet they can be treasured rituals. The point is that families thrive on internal communication, regardless of whether the channels are ritualized or spontaneous.

Discussible questions are almost limitless. Important are those that affect the whole group: where to go on vacation, which house to take, whether to buy a new car or build a garage for the old one. More routine are the children's allowances, when they should go to bed, or where to drive on Sunday afternoon.

Our family was quite democratic. When problems came up or decisions had to be made, we sat down and decided things together. When our neighborhood began to change and our whole block became almost entirely Negro,

we all sat down and discussed whether we felt we should move. My parents felt that the decision should be mainly made by my sister and me. We felt that we didn't want to move and thus we didn't.

The preceding case might more accurately be labeled child-priority than complete democracy. It illustrates, however, the variability and flexibility that alter democratic decision-making under differing circumstances.

Bossard believes that decisions based on everyone's point of view are wiser, more enthusiastically supported, and contribute more to family "we-feeling" (1950a: 76). In addition, group discussion trains children in problem-solving methods they will use when they become parents themselves. Meanwhile, growing children appreciate having their views considered and find their transition from childhood to adulthood eased and the usual parent-adolescent conflict eased, too.

Despite the advantages of democratic decision-making, it is rarely used in the financial area. One study showed that "high-school students on the whole did not participate in the money-management process of the family," nor did they in general seem to want to:

They seemed to trust their parents' judgement and considered their decisions as final. . . . They were given allowances which they apparently considered adequate to cover their needs. Beyond that, only those discussions over money matters that directly affected them held their interest. (Moore, 1953.)

Perhaps that is as it should be. Perhaps family democracy does not require universal participation in every decision, but only that members have the right to be heard when they wish to. If so, we would expect decision-making methods to vary widely with circumstances. Rather than groupness, perhaps the hallmark of family democracy should be flexibility. All-family councils serve some purposes well but not all. They should not be a bottleneck through which all decisions funnel.

## The Division of Labor

Adding children to the family doubles the average mother's housework—at first, at least. As they grow older, children learn to take care of themselves, at least to the point of making their own beds and picking up their toys and blocks. How much they help with the general housework depends on how educational chores seem to the mother. At first, at least, clumsiness and irresponsibility make children more nuisance than help. Yet their natural desire to help (like their desire to know) is an asset worth cultivating. When children want to cook or paint or mow the lawn, they should be encouraged to learn how and given the necessary

instruction. Even though the immediate task is delayed or botched, such motivation is too valuable to rebuff.

When children don't volunteer to work, should they be forced? In earlier times parents were the only instructors. Fathers passed on the lore of woods and sea on which survival depended. Mothers taught the intricacies of fashioning food and clothing from raw materials. Today the urgency of task-training wanes as vocational training is increasingly professionalized and consumer products are ready-made.

As a result task-training and home chores are now optional, designed more to benefit the child than to relieve the parent. They are intended either to prepare him (or especially her) for marriage roles or to benefit his character. On the latter score there is considerable doubt. Harris (1954) finds the number of tasks assigned to children uncorrelated with their sense of responsibility. On the other hand, a few tasks are done regularly by responsible children: boys empty the garbage, girls dry dishes and prepare food for cooking, and both sexes keep their rooms neat.

The latter task is more self-oriented than family-oriented. The rest are being destroyed by mechanization with the rising American standard of living. Harris concludes that the greatest danger for modern families is not that children will be spoiled by too few tasks but angered by too many. Especially if parents give children those tasks which they dislike themselves, negative reactions are predictable:

Such chores are not shared by parents and children working together, but are forced on children as essentially persons of less significance or privilege than adults . . . consequently, children come to dislike them, do them only under pressure, and evade them whenever possible. (Women's News Service, 7/20/60.)

Perhaps such circumstances lie back of the discovery in a study of Waterloo, Iowa high-school girls that parent-child conflicts involve housework more often than any other issue. (Women's News Service, 2/6/57.)

Evidently if children are to help around the house, parents must pay more attention to motivational factors and rely less on sheer dictation. Children respond positively in emergencies (as when the mother is ill) or when their help is necessary because the family is large, etc. Under ordinary circumstances they appreciate companionship in work as much as in practicing music. Family "work parties" to weed the vegetable garden or rake the lawn are fun instead of work. When children work well, parents must be sure to recognize and reward their accomplishments with praise, appreciation, and perhaps compensation. Fundamentally, however, urban parents cannot expect children to take as responsible an attitude toward housework while they are young as they will be forced to when they are adults. By and large the technical

know-how learned from the few surviving chores is less important than their basic socialization in achievement motivation through other channels.

## Family Recreation

With the spread of labor-saving devices, more time is available for recreation. After dinner, many families play games, read aloud, or sing together. Saturdays and Sunday afternoons are family times for working on special projects around the house, going picnicking, swimming, or skating, and visiting kinfolk and friends.

*Rituals.* In living together, families develop patterned ways of doing things which give continuity to family living. The term "ritual" is traditionally applied to religious ceremonies. Bossard feels that the rigidity of behavior patterns and the sense of rightness associated with religious rituals extends to secular patterns as well. Indeed, his study of autobiographies discloses that recreational rituals are the most common form (Bossard and Boll, 1950: 34).

For students at San Diego State College the most important childhood rituals were dinner together at Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and other holidays; opening Christmas presents and decorating the tree; and gifts, cards, or parties to celebrate birthdays, Mother's Day and Father's Day (Klapp, 1959).

Other recreational rituals include the Wednesday night television program everyone anticipates, the family night at gym or swimming pool. Many families develop bedtime rituals. For instance, when Larry was three, he always wanted the same songs in the same order: "Little Boy Blue," "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," and "Rockabye Baby," while Alan prescribed fifteen kisses and one bear hug.

Sundays may involve unfailing visits to grandparents or dinner guests after church. Summer vacations for some become ritualized pilgrimages to the cottage daddy visited when he was a boy.

All sorts of rituals arise spontaneously. A few are consciously engineered. More are handed down from generation to generation, brought into marriage in the roles learned by husband and wife.

Bossard (p. 201) believes that the ritual-produced piling up of happy memories contributes to family integration and to a warm sense of family pride. Klapp finds that solidarity is highest in families with the largest number of rituals.

*Companionship.* Family rituals require the participation of every family member. But families are too complex in age and sex composition to make community of interest possible in every activity. Smaller combinations can have a special closeness the whole group seldom achieves:

I'll never forget the time dad came to visit me at Wellesley. He'd bought a new suit and overcoat which was very unusual for him. He was a real dad to me and we had a fabulous time. The girls in the dorm just loved him. He took several of us to a cabin in the mountains for the weekend with no idea of the money involved. We went on hikes and played cards and stayed up all hours. I wish he'd done that sort of thing more often when I was growing up.

Among Tallahassee teenagers, swimming, movies, fishing, and picnics are enjoyed by many combinations of family members. Ball games and hunting, however, are for fathers and sons only, while mothers and daughters enjoy going shopping together or cooking up special dishes (Connor, 1955). When children are strung out in age, some activities appeal to only the younger ones, while others are too mature for them. Again, flexibility is the answer.

*Balance.* Some families wear themselves out trying to do too many things. Especially when children are old enough to participate in external activities, the demands on the mother for chauffeuring are notoriously heavy. Hawkins and Walters (1952) also find that families with the most domestic recreation also entertain most, attend the most social functions, and engage in the most recreational activities away from home. Perhaps because they overdo things, they also report the most tension in the family.

I never see my children any more. They're out for something every night in the week. Monday is Scout night, Tuesday HI-Y, Wednesday the band rehearses, and Thursday the Senior play. Of course, on Friday and Saturday there are social activities, and Sundays their church YP group meets. It's gotten so we don't seem to have any family life any more.

This is an extreme case, but a common problem. Middle-class people are notorious joiners, and teenagers often imbibe organizational enthusiasm from their parents.

In some communities organizational competition for family time becomes so overwhelming that one night in the week is set aside as a meetingless "Family Night." Even without community support individual families can reserve their own regular family occasions.

Is there any virtue in a special time? If the emphasis falls more on not doing outside things than on the fun the family has together, the end product is likely to be greater tension and hostility. Family fun takes planning and ingenuity, just as organized groups require hard work. If families have enough fun together, children don't have to be coerced into participating.

Parents cannot expect growing children to spend all or most of their time at home. Even ritualized family times need escape clauses. Many adolescent crises have been caused by insistence on participating in a routinized family activity. Every family member (including parents!) needs to be able to "cut" an occasional session.

The balance between internal activities and outside formal and informal activities is necessarily a matter for each family to find. As long as doing things together is fun, well and good. Beyond that, no matter what the magazines advocate, why bother? Pushed too far, fun degenerates into drudgery.

To curtail the danger of overinvolvement, families must stick to those activities they value most. In modern cities there are too many leisure-time pursuits for any family to try them all. Peace of mind comes through the simplification of life—for the family and for the individual. For mothers in particular, the problem piles up most acutely:

How best to serve the family without becoming its victim? For me the answers so far have been: (1) Focus on a warm humorous aura of personal relations. (2) A walk, a nap, a period *alone* to read and reflect are as necessary a part of my day as meals. I get them in first. Then if there's time, I get the housework done. (3) Eliminate, simplify. Things and activities that don't contribute directly to my goals have to go.

The result of such living is an unhurried life, rich in the small moments of family living, and a sufficient amount of energy to react sensitively.

## The Cycle of Family Living

Family relationships change drastically as each child grows older. At first a baby is helpless and completely dependent on his parents. As he learns to walk and talk, he also begins asserting his identity, culminating in the 2½-year-old's delight in discovering that he can say, "No." Negative though he often is, the preschool child is still very much a member of the family. These are years when family interaction is at its peak, when children spend most of their time at home and participate in everything. This is when family rituals are most often innovated—partly for fun, partly as crystallized solutions to harried mothers' needs for order in the midst of chaos (Bossard and Boll, 1950: 143-45).

### THE GRADE-SCHOOL YEARS

When the oldest child marches proudly or dallies reluctantly off to school, his family enters a new era, less involved internally, more involved with the school system and other community agencies.

*Home and School.* Middle-class families usually cooperate closely with the school. Although working-class parents may side with their child against the teacher, middle-class parents form a united front with her. They cooperate not only in crises but also through routine participation in PTA, visits to the classroom, and dinner invitations to the teacher. Regular contact between parent and teacher makes problems easier to deal with when they arise.

In the best of families problems crop up occasionally. Teacher personalities differ so much that the same child may love school one year and loathe it the next.

The classroom atmosphere is seldom identical with the home. Strict parents may be disturbed by the flexibility of a progressive classroom. Or permissive parents may wonder how their child can accept classroom routines. Though the temptation may be great, parents can seldom reform the classroom. The teacher's methods reflect her personality, training, and experience. Discrepancies between home and school seldom disturb children as much as parents fear. A well-adjusted child usually adapts to whatever situation he is in. He sees what is expected of him and acts accordingly. Hence, the same child may delight in freedom at home, yet conform nicely at school (or vice versa).

One reason children adapt so well to school is their admiration for the teacher. Whatever she says tends to be taken as "Gospel truth." When Miss O'Piela says children should brush their teeth *before* breakfast, nothing father and mother can say could persuade Junior to wait till afterward. Parents may be irked by such influence when teacher's views differ from theirs, and may be a little jealous even when they coincide, but respect and affection for the teacher are valuable assets in learning.

Parents should rarely precipitate a showdown with the teacher even over important issues—because the child may be the victim. A teacher under fire from parents unconsciously tends to "take it out" on the child. Acquiescence is not the only alternative, however. Discussion between parent and teacher is more apt to secure the desired results.

When a child is having difficulty, parents can often supply information that makes it easier for the teacher to handle the situation intelligently. A few comments may help her see in kindergarten restlessness Mary's eagerness to learn to read and write like her big sister. Or Alvin's teacher may be glad to hear that last week's inattentiveness resulted from worrying about the illness of his father.

Since children spend more time at school than anywhere else, good home-school relations have far-reaching benefits and are worth more time and effort than the average mother (and especially father) put in. Mary and Lawrence K. Frank (1954: 885) suggest that even parent-teacher conferences are not enough:

Individual conferences between parents and teacher do not take the place of the parents' visit to their child's class. It gives a child a warm, comfortable feeling to know that his father (when he can get away from his work) and mother want to see for themselves what his class is like, what he does in school, how he gets along with the other children. It helps his parents, too, to see his teacher in relation to the class, to see the school program in action. School visits thus enrich not only the parents' understanding of their child's school situation but also the entire relationship between parent and child.

## ADOLESCENCE

In the grade-school years children begin establishing warm friendships outside the family. Yet their parents remain very special people with whom they enjoy doing things.

With adolescence, however, parents lose prestige as the discrepancy narrows between their status as adults and the adolescent's as a "near-adult." Adolescents are halfway between the dependence of childhood and the independence of adulthood.

*Adolescent Ambivalence.* Adolescents are caught in between. While longing for independence, they also fear it. They waver between resentment of parental controls and fear of losing their love. Often they are dissatisfied with their parents, no matter what they do:

When I finished high school I was lost in a world of freedom and completely unable to cope with the situation myself. My parents suggested a trip to South America, but I interpreted the offer as a ruse to try to run my life. I refused and became secretive, evasive, and quite remote from the folks. They tried to reason with me but it did no good. Then they decided that to put me on my own would help, so they said I would have to straighten myself out. This idea filled me with resentment and I stubbornly took the challenge and set off for New York where I lived according to my own dictates, and only succeeded in making matters worse. I went from one job to another and from one trouble to another.

When children resent both freedom and control, parents are understandably baffled. At one moment their teenager seems to want protection, while in the next he wants to be "treated like an adult." Mood swings are sudden and unpredictable. Worse yet, he often doesn't know what he wants or else has irreconcilably contradictory desires.

Faced with this dilemma, many parents are at a loss to know what to do. Especially with daughters, panic sometimes leads them to reinstate long-abandoned childhood controls:

It seems, as I look back on that not-too-far-removed time, that I could do nothing to please my parents—everything was wrong and there was much open conflict between them and me. It seemed as if my parents were reverting to my childhood days again in being extremely overprotective and not allowing me to do anything.

How much freedom daughters can be given varies with the community. In some urban neighborhoods, it isn't safe for an unchaperoned woman to be out on the streets at night (to say nothing of a young girl). In smaller communities such threats do not exist, and teenage girls have correspondingly more freedom of movement:

Since the age of nine, we have lived in a small town in Northern Ohio (population 2,000). My parents did not have to worry about me if I walked to a girl friend's house in the evening or if they left me alone at home. The un-



desirable people who are often seen wandering around city streets at night are just not present in a small town.

*Parental Ambivalence.* Parents have their own mixed feelings which make it hard to be objective. They are proud of the increased skill and stature of their fast-growing offspring. However, they mistrust his judgment and remember the tragedies that befall other adolescents—the auto accidents, premarital pregnancies, and dope addictions. It is difficult to be permissive when such consequences may ensue. Moreover, releasing control means for the mother a cutback in her main role in life the past two decades. Besides, some parents have frustrated ambitions they would like to realize through their children.

Such motives create tendencies to override children's wishes and map out their lives for them. They lead parents to choose careers for their sons and husbands for their daughters. Such "guidance" is rationalized as interest in the children's welfare, but parental values often outweigh the child's own needs.

*Adolescent Rebellion.* When parents apply such pressures, they intensify the adolescent's dilemma. They make his need to rebel greater. But their solicitousness makes rebellion tantamount to betrayal. Caught between powerful desires, he fears rebelling because of the bitterness he knows it will create, yet fears staying as he is because it may frustrate his deepest desires.

While revolution makes parents feel rejected and disillusioned, it may pave the way to better parent-child relations. Sometimes going away to college provides an opportunity for emancipation:

When I transferred to State my parents were far enough away so that they couldn't dominate me as easily. I was much happier since I could be independent and express myself as an individual. I deliberately stayed away from home for a whole year, and they gradually got used to the idea that I loved independence. After that, we grew closer as a family but on a new plane. All along I basically loved both my parents but I could not accept them under the conditions they imposed. This made me feel guilty. Under the new conditions, however, we could again become friends and I was much relieved. My parents were proud of my achievements, yet they felt left out and were worried about the breach. Our new level of acceptance was different than before. It was a mutual respect and a realization of each other's needs. My father began to ask my advice on family and business matters, and I began to take them into my confidence about my aspirations and goals. My parents and I are now very close.

Rebellion does not always have a happy ending, and the process is painful for both generations. Can this problem be avoided? Seldom entirely. But much can be done to smooth the process of emancipation.

*Family Flexibility.* Mature parents who are sensitive to their children can keep up with (and even anticipate) changes in their needs and ca-

pacities. Long before adolescence family consultation builds feelings of self-respect and self-confidence. As children grow older, their ability to participate in decisions increases apace and develops with use.

Adolescents are, after all, in training for adulthood. This does not mean that they *are* adults. They can be expected to make mistakes and come crying home to Mamma. They will sometimes be bewildered and a little frightened by the choices they have to make; hence, eager for guidance. When the going gets rough, they may enjoy being babied a bit. Nevertheless, as trainees they need opportunities to gain experience under supervision.

What is needed therefore is more flexibility—a remarkable combination of support and release, interest and detachment:

My parents have always treated me as an individual and considered me a mature person in accordance with my age. They are always willing to listen to my side of the issue. They never close their minds to my viewpoints and they do not draw conclusions irrationally, but reason things out with me. If I am right they will admit it as readily as I will admit being wrong. They have never been overly strict with me but allowed me to date as soon as I felt I was ready to. They never told me who not to date but felt that I was the best judge of the type of person that I would like. They never gave me a curfew as they felt I had enough sense to know what was a reasonable time to be home. But if, due to unexpected circumstances, I found out I would be home so late that they might worry, I would call home and tell them. This way I was given a certain amount of responsibility, but I did not abuse it. I therefore justified my parents' opinions of my capabilities and gained their respect.

Evidence that a flexible approach lessens intergenerational conflict comes from a study of high-school seniors in the state of Washington. Landis and Stone (1952) found that "democratic" parents handle their teenagers quite differently than "authoritarian" parents. They (1) allow their children to go out as many evenings as they wish; (2) never criticize where they go on dates; (3) are "fairly generous" with allowance money; (4) usually give reasons for requests; (5) discuss family problems with their children; and (6) respect their opinions and judgment "at least half the time."

It is safe to assume that democratic families let their eighteen-year-olds go out any time and any place they wish because the children have internalized appropriate standards of conduct. Granting free rein is good when teenagers are ready for it. More basic, however, to smooth-running family living are discussion processes and respect for opinions which enable parents to get across their own standards at the same time that they find out their children's views.

Table 23-1 shows that problems are not completely absent from democratic families, but they are appreciably fewer. Conflict with parents occurs less often and rebellious wishes to leave home are even more

**Table 23-1—Adolescent Difficulties, by Family Administrative Pattern and by Sex**

Problem	Sex	FAMILY ADMINISTRATIVE PATTERN		
		Democratic	Intermediate	Authoritarian
"Trouble getting along with my parents"	Boys	5.7%	10.6%	17.2%
	Girls	8.4	10.8	24.2
"I want to leave home"	Boys	2.2	2.3	9.1
	Girls	2.8	2.6	12.4
Na. of cases	Boys	769	735	396
	Girls	537	1340	533

Selected from Landis and Stone, 1952: 24-25. Source: 4,310 high-school seniors in Washington State, 1947. Reciprocal percentages of students in each category do not have the specified problem.

sharply reduced. In most areas girls have more complaints than boys, perhaps because parental controls over daughters are tighter.

In practice most middle-class parents in both the United States and Canada treat their adolescents reasonably flexibly. Landis and Stone classify only one-fifth of their families as "authoritarian" whereas twice as many are "democratic." In Montreal, Elkin and Westley find parent-adolescent relationships so harmonious that they label their report "The Myth of Adolescent Culture" (1955). In most families, they assert, the generations share a common culture. In short, the socialization processes of love and discipline described in Chapter 21 can produce adolescents so capable of self-discipline that parents can trust them to abide by family norms—except under the severest provocation.

*Parents and Peers.* No matter how homogeneous the neighborhood, there are times when adolescents are torn between parental instructions and their friends. From the parents' standpoint, the peer group seems a pernicious influence, undermining the standards they try so hard to teach.

Psychologists have long since concluded that cliques contribute to the social development of their members. The family provides interaction with siblings of varying ages and with parents from an older generation. The peer group provides experience with equals in age, strength, and skill. Like families, it gives a sense of security, a sense of belonging to a special group among the hundreds of fellow students. Identification with the group reduces emotional dependence on parents. The emancipation process essential to marriage preparation is assisted by this shift in loyalties from parents to peers.

Children raised in a loving family can usually be trusted to abide by family standards. However, counterpressures from the gang sometimes require parental intervention to rescue children from awkward situations. The child's problem is rarely solved by demanding permanent withdrawal from the group. Enforced severing of group ties is highly traumatic.

Because the group is important, the best approach is to change the group itself. This may seem like an insuperable task, and *is* for a single parent. Often, however, other parents have the same desires, making cooperative efforts possible. When children are young, consultation among parents may suffice to change the situation. By adolescence, joint meetings of both generations can more effectively talk over problems and search for neighborhood solutions. If the problem is getting in too late at night, a common hour may be agreed on. No matter what the problem, change will be easier if everyone changes together.

In a middle-class suburb of Montreal, parents control peer group activities by (a) organizing adolescent activities, (b) sponsoring family activities and (c) jointly setting standards of conduct for the teenager:

Typically on school days, he spends his out-of-school hours doing about two hours of homework, helping in household activities, and participating in school organizations, directed sports, or church activities. . . . Thus, much of the adolescent's activity has a productive or educative orientation. . . . In many areas no sharp distinction is made in the family between parental and adolescent activity. . . . The protectiveness of the setting is perhaps evident in the joint actions of parents regarding the social activities of their adolescent children. Many instances were reported in which parents, in collusion, decided how much allowances should be, the number of dates permitted per week, and the required hour of return from dates. (Westley and Elkin, 1957: 245.)

In exceptional cases parents and peers clash over major issues. One circumstance is where parents represent an old-fashioned ethnic way of life and peers are more Americanized. For example, conflicting pressures undermine parental efforts to "keep kosher" in communities where Jews are a small minority (Rosen, 1955). In general, where peers and parents disagree, adolescents take the easy way out, especially when that is the mode of the dominant culture. Only when parents provide their families with a homogeneous external environment are cross-pressures impossible. This is comparatively easy for the majority group. For minority groups it is seldom possible except in rural isolation, in urban ghettos, or when peer groups form along ethnic lines. Otherwise adolescents caught between parents and peers often change their values or else they have to change groups! To be caught in the middle is too hard for ambivalent adolescents to endure for long. The need for conformity, for group security, is too great to be easily resisted:

I felt that I had to do everything that my friends did. I had to dress exactly like the other girls and had a terrific argument with my mother because she felt that I was too thin to wear the straight skirts that *everyone* else wore. If my mother or father would say they would rather I didn't do something the other kids were doing, it was enough to send me into tears for an hour.

Fortunately, crises are not the general pattern of adolescence. When parents tolerate the idiosyncracies of the group or collaborate to control

them, teenagers don't have to choose: "The protective environment is effective in Suburban Town because it has become the accepted pattern of life and because it is so completely accepted by the adolescents themselves" (Westley and Elkin, p. 246).

#### TERMINAL STAGES

Families enter the "launching stage" when the first child leaves home to go out into the world of jobs and marriage. For parents absorbed in their children this process is like bereavement. Life turns barren and meaningless. Such parents subtly block their children's marriages and turn into meddling in-laws.

Mature parents make the transition more easily. Watching their children get married punctuates their lives too, but the tears shed at the wedding are at least partly tears of joy. Launching young adults into the world is as much an accomplishment as completing a business venture:

We know that our children don't need us as much any more, now that they are grown up and have families of their own. It makes us feel old now, and that our work is accomplished. This is a somewhat sad feeling but it is mitigated by the gratification of knowing that we have given to society four fine young citizens who are well-adjusted and useful.

Launching seldom means cutting family ties altogether. Usually, visiting and correspondence maintain the ties of friendship. When families live close enough together, there are chances to babysit and help out in other ways.

But the old home now contains only the two people who started the first stage of family life many years before. In some ways this is a relief—an emancipation from responsibility that parents often look forward to during the child-rearing years (Deutscher, 1959). Not since the days of courtship and early marriage have they been so carefree, so able to do whatever they want without the impediments of children. The occasion may well call for a second honeymoon.

In any case there is a chance now for summer travel and February in Florida. Friends can be entertained without fear of waking the children. Gone are the days when the expense of evenings out was doubled by babysitting fees. Husband and wife can chat at dinner without having to compete with eager youngsters.

Old age is sad in some ways, but the advantages are real. For the typical couple this new relationship lasts some fourteen years before widowhood and the end of family living (Glick, 1955).



READINGS

AND

REFERENCES





# *Recommended Readings*

Among the many books and articles on marriage, the following are especially suitable supplements to this book:

## Chapter 1. Dating: Practice for Marriage

Burgess, Ernest W., and Paul Wallin. 1953. *Engagement and Marriage*. Philadelphia: Lippincott. Chapter 4, "Going Together," summarizes the major studies on dating.

## Chapter 2. Choosing a Marriage Partner

Winch, Robert F. 1958. *Mate-Selection: A Study of Complementary Needs*. New York: Harper. Research report on complementary needs in mate-selection plus case studies, theory, and a cross-cultural review of mate-selection.

## Chapter 3. Mixed and Unmixed Marriages

Bossard, James H. S., and Eleanor S. Boll. 1957. *One Marriage, Two Faiths*. New York: Ronald. Case materials and research findings on intermarriages between various faiths.

Katz, Alvin, and Reuben Hill. 1958. "Residential Propinquity and Marital Selection," *Marriage and Family Living*, 20: 27-35. Summary of studies and interpretation of cause-and-effect relationships.

Pike, James A. 1954. *If You Marry Outside Your Faith*. New York: Harper. An Episcopal Bishop's analysis of Catholic-Protestant problems in particular, with chapters on Jewish-Christian and interdenominational marriages.

## Chapter 4. Love: Developing a Personal Relationship

Fromm, Erich. 1956. *The Art of Loving*. New York: Harper. A lyrical exposition of the requirements for achieving love at its best in heterosexual (as well as other) relations.

## Chapter 5. Giving Physical Expression to Love

Ehrmann, Winston W. 1959. *Premarital Dating Behavior*. New York: Holt. Rather technical report of a research project focusing on the processes of control over premarital intimacy.

Reiss, Ira L. 1960. *Premarital Sexual Standards in America*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe. An essay on the differences between, and consequences of, the several philosophies about premarital intimacy.

## Chapter 7. Rites of Passage: I. Engagement

Burgess, Ernest W., and Paul Wallin. 1953. *Engagement and Marriage*. Philadelphia: Lippincott. Study of 1,000 engaged couples before and after marriage, with detailed analyses of why some of the engagements were broken.

Waller, Willard (rev. by Reuben Hill). 1951. *The Family: A Dynamic Interpretation*. New York: Holt. Chapter 12, "The Engagement: A Bridge to Marriage."

## Chapter 8. Rites of Passage: II. Wedding and Honeymoon

Duvall, Evelyn, and Reuben Hill. 1960. *Being Married*. New York: Association. Chapter 9, "Your Wedding Plans." Practical details.

## Chapter 9. Initiating Marriage Roles

Spiegel, John P. 1957. "The Resolution of Role Conflict within the Family," *Psychiatry*, 20: 1-16. (Reprinted in Norman W. Bell and Ezra

F. Vogel. 1960. *A Modern Introduction to the Family*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.) Types of role conflict and means by which family members influence each other in order to bring about re-equilibration.

## Chapter 10. Love: Maintaining the Relationship

Blood, Robert O., Jr., and Donald M. Wolfe. 1960. *Husbands and Wives*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe. Chapter 7, "Understanding and Emotional Well-Being." Detailed empirical report on husbandly therapy for wives' emotional stresses.

Levy, John, and Ruth Munroe. 1945. *The Happy Family*. New York: Knopf. Chapter 2, "Settling Down to Marriage." The process of disenchantment.

Mace, David R. 1958. *Success in Marriage*. Nashville: Abingdon. Chapter 20, "Drifting Apart." Causes and cures for disengagement.

## Chapter 11. Divorce and Remarriage

Goode, William J. 1956. *After Divorce*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe. An exhaustive study of the causes, processes, and effects of divorce and remarriage on a random sample of divorced Detroit mothers.

Pilpel, Harriet F., and Theodora Zavin. 1952. *Your Marriage and the Law*. New York: Holt. The legal aspects of marriage and divorce described for the layman.

## Chapter 12. Decision-Making in Marriage

Bales, R. F., and F. L. Strodtbeck. 1951. "Phases in Group Problem-solving," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 46: 485-95. By observing small groups in action, the phases in the problem-solving process are discovered.

Blood, Robert O., Jr., and Donald M. Wolfe. 1960. *Husbands and Wives*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe. Chapter 2, "The Power to Make Decisions." Report on the power structure of Detroit marriages.

Mudd, Emily Hartshorne. 1951. *The Practice of Marriage Counseling*. New York: Association. A report on marriage counseling facilities and practices in the United States, concentrating on the author's Marriage Council of Philadelphia.

### Chapter 13. The Division of Labor

Blood, Robert O., Jr. 1962. "The Effects of the Wife's Employment on the Husband-Wife Relationship." In F. Ivan Nye and Lois W. Hoffman, *The Employed Mother*. Chicago: Rand McNally. A review of the literature and integration of apparently contradictory findings.

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### Chapter 14. Family Financial Management

Morgan, James N. 1955. *Consumer Economics*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. Chapter 6, "Risks and Insurance." A penetrating analysis of the costs and values of insurance from a family life cycle point of view.

### Chapter 15. The Extended Family Networks

Duvall, Evelyn M. 1954. *In-laws: Pro and Con*. New York: Association. A comprehensive study of in-law relationships with suggestions for their improvement.

Sussman, Marvin B. 1953. "The Help Pattern in the Middle-Class Family," *American Sociological Review*, 18: 22-8. How young married couples and their parents maintain a mutually helpful relationship.

### Chapter 16. Religion in Family Living

Lenski, Gerhard. 1961. *The Religious Factor*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday. Chapter 5, "Religion and Family Life." Differences between Catholics, Jews, white Protestants, and Negro Protestants in Detroit family living.

### Chapter 17. Companionship in Leisure

Blood, Robert O., Jr., and Donald M. Wolfe. 1960. *Husbands and Wives*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe. Chapter 6, "Companionship." Leisure-time conversation, sharing friends, sociability with colleagues, and joint participation in organizations.

Foote, Nelson N. 1956. "Matching of Husband and Wife in Phases of Development," *Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology*, Vol. 4. London: International Sociological Association. Statement of an ideal of marriage as encouraging individual growth.

LeMasters, E. E. 1957. *Modern Courtship and Marriage*, New York: Macmillan. Chapter 22, "How the Other Half Lives." A graphic description of distinctively masculine interests.

## Chapter 18. Sex: The Most Intimate Relationship

Calderone, Mary S. 1960. *Release from Sexual Tensions: Toward an Understanding of Their Causes and Effects in Marriage*. New York: Random House. Wise counsel on means of coping with difficulties and improving the quality of sexual relationships.

Davis, Maxine. 1956. *The Sexual Responsibility of Woman*. New York: Dial. Written especially for wives to aid their sexual functioning.

Greenblat, Bernard R. 1957. "A Doctor's Marital Guide for Patients." Chicago: Budlong. A compact pamphlet, available through medical sources, which distills the essentials of sex information and technique.

## Chapter 19. Family Planning

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